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The Beaver

EXPLORING · CANADA'S · HISTORY

Victorian Celebrations in Atlantic Canada

The Fifth-Column Crisis

Feasts of the North Westers

The Beaver

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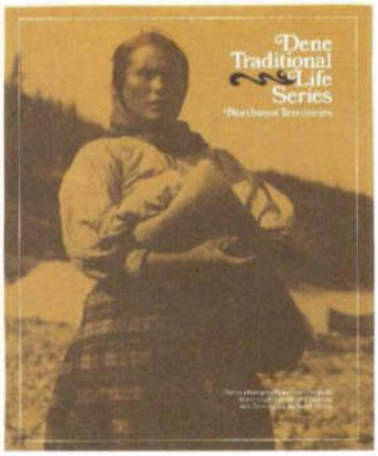

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Frugal Festivities

On Christmas Day, 1820, George Simpson, who was just beginning his long career with the Hudson's Bay Company, sat uncomfortably in Fort Wedderburn on the southwestern shore of Lake Athabasca writing a letter. It was a cold and bitter day: ". . . within 4 feet of a large fire the Ink actually freezes in my pen." Nevertheless, there were comforts at hand: "This being Xmas Day the people had a dram in the morning and were allowed to make holyday. The Gentlemen sat down to the most sumptuous Dinner that Fort Wedderburn could afford, true English fare, Roast Beef & plum pudding and afterwards a temperate Kettle of Punch."

It was much worse at Osnaburgh House twenty years earlier, as a forlorn entry in the journal indicates: "A porr Christmas Day at Osnaburg. Very little victuals to eat and nothing to drink but water."

The Christmas celebrations of early Canada were often, of necessity, frugal, but even under the most trying conditions and in the most isolated locations the spirit of the season found a little room next to the fire. There was little to rejoice over at Fort Charles on James Bay at Christmas, 1670, but provisions and drink were provided and a feast of sorts was managed: "25 being Christmas day wee made merry remembering our Friends in England, having for Liquor Brandy & strong beer & for Food plenty of Partridges & Venison besides what ye shipps provisions afforded."

The Jesuit Jerome Lalemant, marked Christmas 1645 in Quebec, an event that he carefully recorded in his journal:

> The first bell was rung at eleven o'clock, the second a little before the half-hour, and immediately after we began to sing two carols, *Venez, mon Dieu* and *Chantons Noé*, Monsieur de la Ferté playing the bass viol, Saint-Martin the violin. We also had a German flute, but when we got to the church we found it could not be played in tune.
>
> We finished carols a little before midnight, and proceeded without delay to the *Te Deum*; and a little after this was done we fired off a cannon for the midnight signal, and Mass was begun.

Religious observation was also emphasized at Moose Factory at Christmas 1747, with the frugal John Potts presiding. The men, who had been inclined to yearn for strong drink, were given other things to think about: "Spent the Day in Religious Exercise and to prevent hard Drinking I did Read over to them one of the Little Books Your Honrs. was pleased to Send us Last Year; wch. is a Disswasive from the Sin of Drunkenness. I gave them a Little Liqur. in the Evening and at Eight o Clock Ordered all hands to bed and the Lights out." One is tempted to wonder whether this really happened or whether Potts, in an attempt to please the Committee back in London, was laying it on with a shovel.

At York Fort at Christmas 1715 the men had prayers twice before sitting down to a hearty meal. They had a livelier time at Eastmain in 1764, with the festivities beginning on Christmas Eve: "Broach'd a Cask of Strong Beer, drank your Honrs. Health & a merry Christmas to all Friends in the Bay." By the next day, however, the drink having run out — or been cut off — the men "Spent the Day wth. sobriety making merry wth. Innocent Diversions." No further details of these "Innocent Diversions" are given and we can only imagine the curious spectacle of large fur traders playing Leap-Frog, I Spy, and Blind Man's Buff.

John Howison, in his *Sketches of Upper Canada*, published in 1821, gives us a hauntingly moving description of an almost dreamlike incident in the winter woods at Christmas: "When it was midnight, I walked out, and strolled in the woods . . . . I was suddenly roused from a delicious reverie, by observing a dark object moving slowly and cautiously among the trees. At first, I fancied it was a bear, but a nearer inspection discovered an Indian on all fours. For a moment I felt unwilling to throw myself in his way, lest he should be meditating some sinister design against me; however, on his waving his hand, and putting his finger to his lips, I approached him, and notwithstanding his injunction to silence, inquired what he did there. 'Me watch to see the deer kneel', replied he; 'This is Christmas night, and all the deer fall upon their knees

to the Great Spirit, and look up.' The solemnity of the scene, and the grandeur of the idea, alike contributed to fill me with awe."

At Fort Edmonton in 1855 an entry in the journal tells of celebration and renewal: "Christmas. Clear and cold weather, wind North. The people enjoying their holidays. Some of the Lake St Ann Freemen were supplied with necessaries for the Buffalo hunt. The wife of Abraham Valois delivered of a Boy this morning."

In 1952 the Winnipeg historian Lillian Gibbons interviewed an elderly woman, Freda McLean, daughter of HBC chief trader W.J. McLean, who lived at Lower Fort Garry until she was nine years old. In the old days, she recalled, "we never had less than 30 people to dinner at Christmas and New Year's. We children were allowed to see the dancing."

Mrs. Lil Ploughman, writing in 1961, recalled her first Christmas in the North many years before: "Our tree was a broomstick with wires for branches labouriously covered with green wool. Our turkey was a stuffed Arctic Hare. Everyone in the village from the oldest man to the youngest infant made the rounds to wish us a Merry Christmas. There was a little bag with cookies, candy and nuts for everyone. Your hand was sore at the end of the day. There were dog races, sack races, tug-of-war, and mad mad scrambles for everything from gum to nuts. Our own Christmas gifts and supplies had come in the previous summer on the supply boat." That was life at Chesterfield Inlet in the 1940s.

In 1947, Vera Lysenko, in her book *Men in Sheepskin Coats*, described the Christmas festivities of the Ukrainian settlers on the prairies at the end of the nineteenth century:

Miss McLean also recalled the Christmas games played at Lower Fort Garry long ago: "I remember too the snapdragon — a bowl of nuts and raisins lit with brandy, the way people still light plum pudding. The idea was to quickly pull out a nut or a raisin while the flames were shaping, like Little Jack Horner." (See page 10).

At Christmas 1939, according to a Canadian Press report printed in the *Montreal Herald*, Inuit at Nottingham Island, 500 miles east of Resolution Island, celebrated with a feast of roast chicken, polar bear steak, seal liver, plum pudding, hot mince pie, nuts, raisins and other treats.

At Lake Harbour in 1935, the Hudson's Bay Company trader had a busy day: "Traded 32 foxes today. In the afternoon treated a few natives for minor ailments and hauled out a tooth for Mukkievik. At night the natives were given a big feed of beans, tea and biscuits and a scramble of candy. They afterwards held a dance in the native house, which continued until midnight."

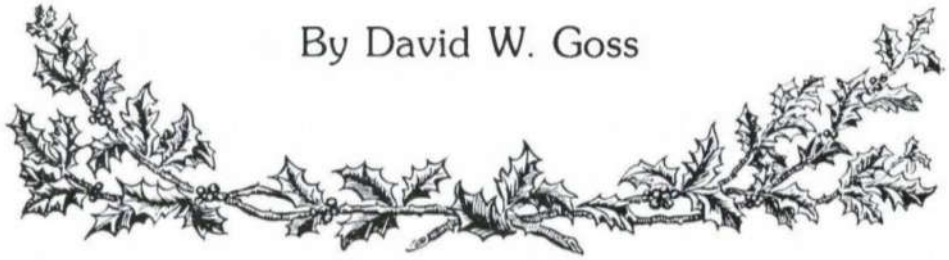
Before supper was eaten, the father exclaimed: "Christ is born!" And the women and children replied, "Praise His name!"

Then all sat down to supper of twelve dishes (for the twelve apostles): jellied fish, beans, plums, dumplings stuffed with cabbage or mushrooms, sour soup, herring, cheese, cabbage rolls, poppy seed cakes, meat pastries, buckwheat meal, and the sacred kutya of wheat, honey, nuts, poppy seed. If any of the family had died, there were spoons and bowls set for them at the table since the Ukrainians believe that the souls of the dead return at Christmas as guests to their homes and fly over the table to see if they are not forgotten.

And so it is for all of us at every Christmas celebration — past, present and yet to come; frugal or lavish; grand or humble. At this point of light and warmth in the long Canadian winter the spirits of the past hover over our festivities and for a brief, happy hour Time Past, Time Present and Time Yet to Come combine and enhance our day.

— Christopher Dafoe

Christmas Past: A Victorian Garland



By David W. Goss

Though some would give a convincing argument that Christmas has been celebrated in Maritime Canada for almost 400 years — since the arrival of Champlain and de Monts in the area in 1604 — the real development of the festive season and its very Victorian traditions that we refer to today when speaking of an "old-fashioned Christmas" really began to form about a third of the way through the last century.

Certainly there are earlier references to the "Day" itself, which indicates Christmas was celebrated with vigour in some homes, but ignored completely in others, and this would be expected from the varied religious backgrounds of Loyalist settlers who populated the Maritimes following the Revolutionary War in the United States.

It is obvious from reading a letter written from Portland Point at the mouth of the St. John River by settler James Simonds on 26 December 1764, that Christmas was not a happy occasion in that pre-Loyalist era. He was waiting for a long-overdue ship with provisions, and wrote that his men were "in low spirits, having nothing to eat but pork and bread and nothing but water to drink."

By contrast, 30 years later when Lady Jane Hunter, wife of the Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's Forces in North America, visited Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, she was able to report that the settlers enjoyed a "gay" season just after Christmas, with everybody "flying about in sleighs in the morning and going to Gregorys and dances in the evenings," explaining Gregorys as "stupid card parties where you are crammed with tea, coffee, cakes, and then in an hour or two, cold turkey, ham and a profusion of tarts, pies and sweet meats; punch, wine, port, liqueurs and all sort of drink."

In 1807 Lady Hunter wrote from Fredericton to a friend in England describing the children's anticipation of the arrival of the gifts of the season. She noted, "Tomorrow is Christmas and the children are saying, 'Oh, Mama, what do you think the fairy will put into our stockings?' Queen Mab is a Dutch Fairy that I was never introduced to in England, or Scotland; but she is a great favourite of the little folks in this and the other province, and if they hang up a stocking on Christmas eve, she always pops something good into it, unless they are very naughty, and then she puts in a birch rod."

In contrast to Lady Hunter's experience was that of George Head, another visitor from Britain, who wrote in great length of his trip through Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in December of 1829, but made no mention at all of Christmas decorations, church services or the exchange of good wishes at social occasions he attended.

"Halifax Morning Chronicle", 1890.

NEARLY CAUGHT.

In 1822, Clement Clarke Moore wrote his famed *A Visit from St. Nicholas*. It was strictly an entertainment for his own children in New York, but a copy in Moore's hand in the New Brunswick Museum seems to indicate his godfather, Rev Jonathan Odell, may also have had a copy to read to his children in Fredericton as early as 1825. On 25 December 1830, anyone in New Brunswick who had access to the *New Brunswick Courier* could read their children Moore's poem almost as it is known today, and it was such readings that formed the modern image of Santa Claus throughout the Maritimes and elsewhere in the Canadas and the world.

Christmas sentiment, late nineteenth century.

With the steady influx of new settlers coming to the Maritimes from England, Ireland and Scotland, came a variety of ideas for marking Christmas as it was being done in the old country where a revival of old-time customs was underway.

When it became known that Charles Dickens would stop in Halifax on his 1842 visit, there was great interest in the occasion. Even though he had not yet published his famous work, *A Christmas Carol*, some of his earlier Christmas readings had begun the work that the "Carol" all but completed in re-inventing Christmas. When Dickens returned to America via Halifax in Canada's Confederation year, there was a plea from both Saint John and Halifax that he should come to present his famed Christmas story, but, Dickens' schedule did not allow for a reading in either city, though both enjoyed dramatic presentations of his works by itinerant readers and travelling dramatic companies.

It was in the early 1860s that the season began to see the first of the commercial overtones that drives it today, and the change was rapid. Merchants had goods to sell and newspapers of the day had space to fill, and the combination proved enough to change the tone of the season forever.

By the 1880s advertising began as soon as All Soul's Day had passed, the buyers often being warned that a shipment of the latest in china, millinery, dress goods, or foodstuffs, had arrived by barque from the old country and would likely be the last such items received before Christmas. That such advertisements continued to appear till the last week of January indicates such promotions were not always on the up and up.

One scribe in the *Fredericton Capital* of 25 December 1886 wrote of the change in the level of gift-giving saying, "Plenty of people give presents because it is expected of them, not because they have a feeling of tenderness toward their fellow mortals." And another of his kind noted of his task of reviewing in great detail in the news columns the availability of goods in the advertisers' stores, "The scribe is expected to tell all that is for sale, and a little more, to scatter taffy promiscuously upon the hardware establishment, and the vendor of two cent nicknacks, and to lay the blarney on with the skill of a lover."

When it came to a choice for gifts, there was nothing available in London or New York that was not also available in the mercantile concerns in the Maritimes. A writer on a search for a suitable gift in Halifax in 1888 noted after visiting a great many of the leading stores of the city, "One is almost as much in doubt as before, . . . (and) confused by the beauty and multiplicity of goods offered."

To make the job easier, each store had its promotional gimmicks. Many told their story in verse as part of their advertisements. One of them was The London Drug Store on Hollis Street in Halifax, which noted:

> Christmas comes but once a year,
> Before it comes you must prepare
> To send cards to friends both far and near.
> And if you'd like to find out where
> To purchase gifts handsome and rare,
> A moment lend a willing ear
> While my friend I whisper there!

In the 1880s it also became possible to use illustrations for the first time, but only the more progressive merchants such as Turner and Finlay in Saint John felt it necessary, most still preferring to

Charles Dickens was credited by many with re-inventing Christmas. Mr. Fezziwig's ball from "A Christmas Carol" set the tone for many Victorian Christmas celebrations.

simply list the goods that they had for sale, and boasting that their prices were "sure to please."

Most stores made some attempt to decorate for the season, though in some it was simply a few sprigs of spruce tucked behind the owner's portrait, or credentials certificate. Other shops, though, were lavishly bedecked with greens, and went to great lengths to portray community events, like skating on the Lily Lake in Saint John or on the Common in Halifax. Often, the merchant used his goods for sale in effective, though not particularly festive displays, such as a Halifax butcher who placed a "large side of bacon containing a representation of a rooster and a chick just emerging from a shell, and underneath, 'Does your mother know you're out?' " to bring customers to his shop.

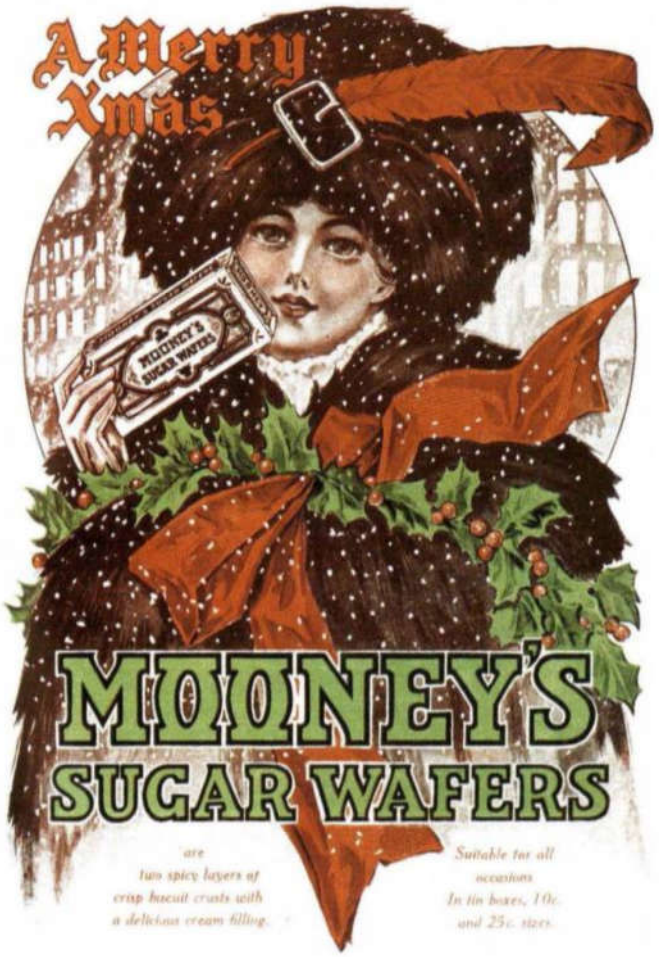
The introduction of the electric light to cities in the Maritimes in the mid-1880s gave a new opportunity to draw customers, and it was quickly embraced. The Diamond Bookstore in Charlottetown boasted that their customers would no longer have to browse in a dimly lit store, but the electric light made the "nights as bright as day." As an added attraction, owner Theo Chappelle's "exquisite music from his celebrated music box," would be playing for the bookseeker.

Many of the stores boasted that they were the headquarters for Santa Claus, but few really had the old gent himself at their disposal. One notable exception was Charles Sampson of Fredericton, who advertised on 9 December 1872 that Santa would arrive at his downtown store on the 22nd, and would deliver gifts from his sleigh on the principal streets of the city. As well, Santa would be at Sampson's shop on Christmas morning to pass out free presents to area children, a custom he continued for some years.

In Saint John, Santa was not seen in the leading store, M.R.A.'s (Manchester, Robertson and Allison) till over a decade later.

M.R.A.'s was very careful to have Santa depart a couple of days before Christmas, always explaining that he had so much work to do he had "asked to be released from further attendance."

Nonetheless, the appearance of the bearded gentleman had become so regular by the mid-1880s that in 1888 the *Halifax Morning Chronicle* whined, "St Nicholas . . . was formerly believed in by boys and girls until they were twelve or fifteen. Now, it is a dull child of eight who has not exploded the whole story in the most cold-blooded fashion."


A Merry Xmas
MOONEY'S
SUGAR WAFERS
are two spicy layers of crisp biscuit crusts with a delicious cream filling.
Suitable for all occasions
In tin boxes, 10c. and 25c. sizes.

Competing with the merchants for trade were the numerous "bazaars" sponsored by the churches and many benevolent organisations. Most bazaars had a decorated tree as their chief attraction and often their only promotion was a bold title in the newspaper "XMAS TREE", with directions to the location. This was enough to get buyers in the door. Though the first Christmas tree is said to have been seen in Halifax as early as 1816, and records clearly show the decorated tree was part of the social life at the Barracks in Fredericton beginning in the 1860s, and most secular and Sunday school closing from the mid-1880s would feature a tree to be stripped of its treats, it was rare for a decorated tree to be seen in the home until very late in the last century, and thus it remained a saleable commodity as part of the bazaar scene.

An edited description of a bazaar in Charlottetown at Christmas 1888 is fairly typical of those held everywhere in Maritime Canada at the time. It read, "CHRISTMAS TREE BAZAAR. There was a large attendance at the Christmas Tree and Bazaar in St. Joseph's Convent last evening . . . those present appeared to thoroughly appreciate the effort . . . The trees were well stocked with articles both ornamental and useful, as were the different fancy tables. The tea and refreshment tables, loaded as they were with all the good things imaginable, did a rushing business. Oysters and ice cream were also in abundance . . . There were, of course, the usual number of lotteries, . . . and during the evening St. Dunstan's College Brass Band played several very nice selections."

The idea that the Christmas dinner should be the finest of the year was certainly well established in the Maritimes well before the Victorian era, and the meal enjoyed then was not much different from what we would call an old-fashioned Christmas dinner today. In 1898 noted New Brunswick historian Clarence Ward put together a description of Christmas in Saint John in 1808 based on interviews he had done with older area residents. In this short excerpt from his essay, he describes a Christmas dinner of the time:

> The great event of the day was still before them — the Christmas dinner. . . . The usual hour for dinner was 4 o'clock. All being assembled at the table, thanks were given for many mercies and for the beautiful repast before them, and the Christmas feast began. The viands were all the product of the country: turkey, beef, poultry, game, venison, all the best of their kind; good humour, mirth, jollity were the order of the day. After the solids were removed, came on dessert, pies, puddings, custards, nuts, apples, and other good things, with port, sherry and madeira. It was the day of toasts and drinking wine with each other. . .

Later in the century it became fashionable for the more affluent to dine out at Christmas. The leading

"Father Christmas", as depicted in the "Fredericton Capital" newspaper in 1887, is more like a gnome than the Santa Claus delineated by the American Thomas Nast at the same period.

hotels usually prepared elaborate menus and these would be reviewed in the newspaper. There were seldom costs mentioned, and paid advertising was rare. This unique, though rough, poetical presentation from a Fredericton restaurant gives a sample of the range of food one could expect in 1894:

Christmas comes once a year
and with it comes good cheer.
If you for a nice Christmas dinner would enjoy
then for Lindsay's restaurant you had better inquire.
Just call in and view the bill of fare,
All kinds of delicacies are there.
For soup, Oyster, Chicken you can get
No place in town can you get better.
For entrees, Scrambled eggs and
kidney *sauté* on toast
Then you can have your choice of roast.
The Roast goose and apple sauce will be a treat
Turkey and dressing with cranberry sauce
a pleasure to eat.
Then a piece of mince pie you'd better try
I know that you it will satisfy.
No don't forget the English plum pudding too,
With brandy sauce that will please you.
Lindsay as a host you'll see
will treat you with civility,
So don't forget on him to call
A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
he wishes all.

Those in institutions were treated to Christmas dinners as fine as Lindsay served to his restaurant clientele, and usually received a gift of the season to raise their spirits if they were sick, infirm, orphaned, or far from home, such as the seamen who frequented the area in the days of wooden ships. For the most part the charitable treat would be distributed on the 25th, not before or after as is common now. For example on the 28th of December 1887 the *Halifax Morning Chronicle* reported on visits that were made to the Protestant Industrial School, St. Patrick's Home, The Catholic Orphanage, The Protestant Orphan Home, The Blind Asylum, The Sailors' Home, St. Paul's Alms House, and the poor home at Rockhead, where Governor Murray visited and noted, "My only hope is that all the poor people of the city were, or could be, looked after today as my wards were."

Part of each of these and most other acts of charity at the time was a proclamation of the Gospel of Christ and the Christian message of the season. The church was still the chief provider of social service in this era, and since few families did not at some time fall on hard times, most had a faith connection. At Christmas the churches were packed with worshippers. Some churches, particularly the Anglican, were lavishly decorated with greenery and mottos to the extent that they seemed as much like the forest as the forest itself. The Catholic churches usually adorned the altars with tapers and vases of flowers with chrysanthemums being very popular, but used greenery sparingly, instead, focusing attention on a simple crib. The Baptists and Methodists scorned decorations, though late in the century a few started to allow Sunday school halls to be decorated, trees erected, and Santa to visit their scholars with the same sort of treats he brought to children in the other church schools.

On Christmas Day, the services would feature more congregational singing than usual, and, for the most part, the words, if not the tunes, would be familiar to us today. *O Come All Ye Faithful, While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, It Came Upon a Midnight Clear, Angels From the Realms of Glory and The First Nowell,* were already popular. Though many musical settings were used for the services the most oft-mentioned were Mozart's 12th Mass and John Bacchus Dykes' eucharist accompaniment. One element all the churches had in common was that the offering on Christmas Day was designated for the poor in keeping with the spirit of the season.

Christmas Day was also the occasion of the presentation of purses of money, sometimes durable

The author decorates a tree in the Special Collections Room of the Saint John, New Brunswick, library. Queen Victoria looks on.

The dangerous game of "Snapdragon" as depicted in "Harper's New Monthly Magazine".

goods, or foodstuffs. Most of the gifts were from employee to employer, or worker to boss, such as this example from Saint John: "Superintendent Ellis of the Street Railway smokes a very handsome meerschaum pipe, the gift of the drivers of the road." The opposite was true in Marysville, where in 1883 it was reported that Alex (Boss) Gibson had a turkey delivered to each of the employees of his cotton mill, and that those who sang on Christmas morning in the Marysville church were each presented with a cash gift of $25.

Courtesy of the Chesley Collection

The Chesley children of St. John enjoy their Christmas tree and presents at the end of the Victorian era.

While most of the activity of Christmas Day centred on the home, between church in the morning and the late afternoon meal many folks found time for a bit of winter activity. Sleigh rides were a popular diversion, as was skating, snowshoeing, curling and tobogganing. In Saint John, Lily Lake, just minutes from downtown, would attract vast crowds to try their newly received, locally made "Long Reacher" skates, while in Halifax, the downtown Common was the spot to try the "Acme" skate, made in Dartmouth. If Christmas day was cold and fine, the stable men could expect a busy day. When the weather didn't co-operate, there was great disappointment.

Grand indoor rinks such as the Victoria, in Saint John, the Arctic in Moncton and Exhibition in Halifax existed in this era too and where there were no hills for tobogganing, such as in Fredericton and Moncton, toboggan slides were built and these facilities could expect "liberal patronage," as the papers would say, on Christmas Day.

Indoor games were a popular diversion, too. In the seldom-opened parlours, children would gather to play such games as Simon Says, Blind Man's Buff, Russian Scandal, Puss in the Corner, Blind Postman, Trades, Musical Chairs, to name a few. Many of these are played to this day, but under different names. One that was popular that has disappeared was a game called "Snapdragon". This excerpt from the *Charlottetown Examiner* of 1885 clearly shows this was a dangerous activity, but the same description could have been taken from almost any paper of the era, which indicates it was enjoyed widely. "First and foremost among the Christmas games is 'Snapdragon'. A quantity of raisins and other fruit is thrown in a large bowl or tub, red spirits or wine cast over these are suddenly ignited. The children standing around are required to pluck the raisins from the flames and they

Merry Christmas

We very much regret that there is no snow to make coasting for the happy children of our city; also, by the way, that there is no place provided where our children can coast without breaking our city's laws. In the meantime we must be content, and make the Christmas as joyous as possible. To that end we should be pleased to have all inspect our varied stock of

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Mistletoe

—AND—

Holly,

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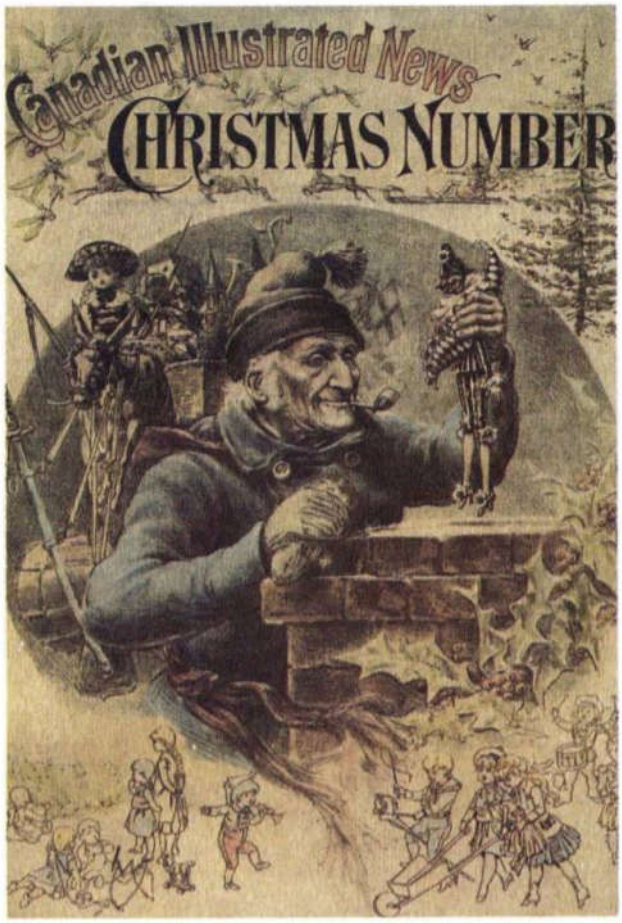
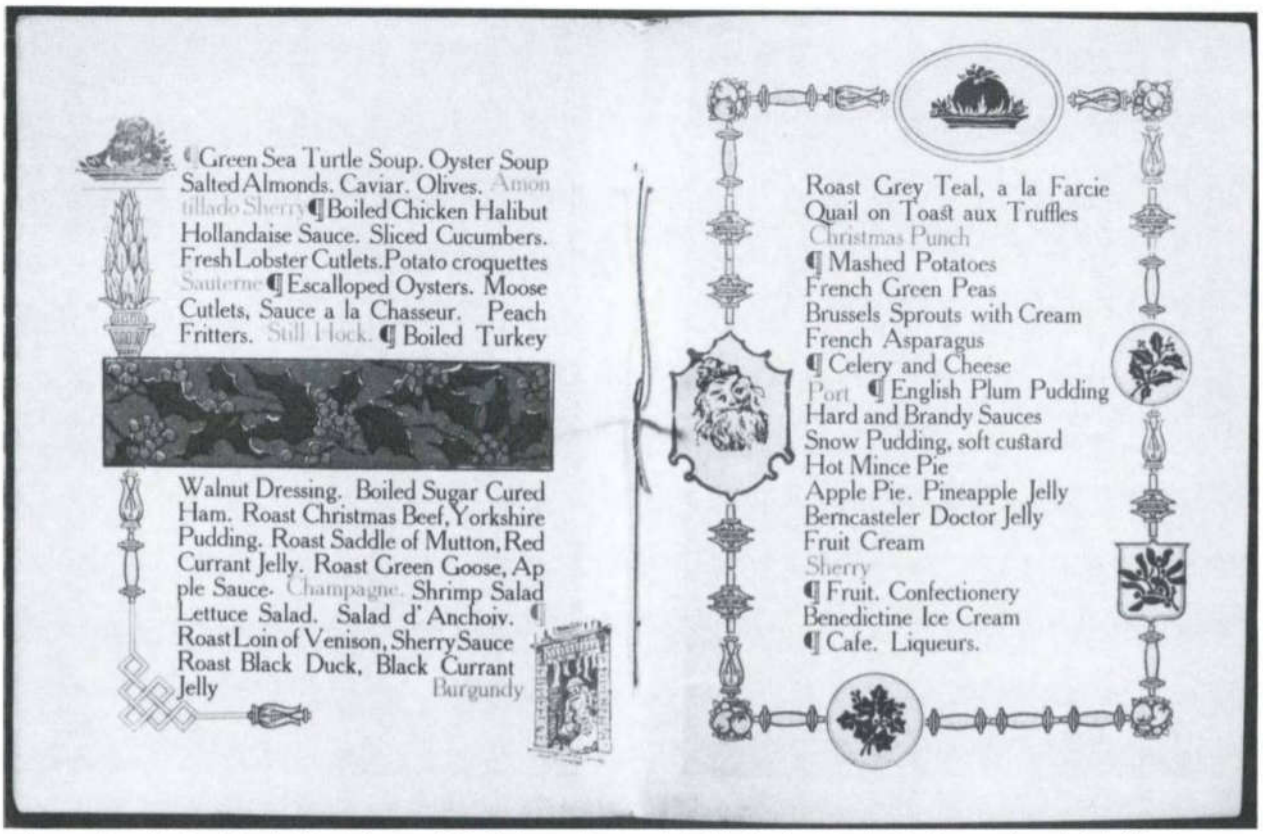
CHRISTMAS!



A Canadian Santa Claus by Henri Julien, from "Canadian Illustrated News", December 1885.

Santa offers books for Christmas in this advertisement from the "Charlottetown Examiner", 20 December 1888.


¶ Green Sea Turtle Soup. Oyster Soup
Salted Almonds. Caviar. Olives. Amontillado Sherry ¶ Boiled Chicken Halibut
Hollandaise Sauce. Sliced Cucumbers.
Fresh Lobster Cutlets. Potato croquettes
Sauterne ¶ Escalloped Oysters. Moose
Cutlets, Sauce a la Chasseur. Peach
Fritters. Still Hock. ¶ Boiled Turkey
Walnut Dressing. Boiled Sugar Cured
Ham. Roast Christmas Beef, Yorkshire
Pudding. Roast Saddle of Mutton, Red
Currant Jelly. Roast Green Goose, Ap
ple Sauce. Champagne. Shrimp Salad
Lettuce Salad. Salad d' Anchoiv. ¶
Roast Loin of Venison, Sherry Sauce
Roast Black Duck, Black Currant
Jelly
Burgundy
Roast Grey Teal, a la Farcie
Quail on Toast aux Truffles
Christmas Punch
¶ Mashed Potatoes
French Green Peas
Brussels Sprouts with Cream
French Asparagus
¶ Celery and Cheese
Port ¶ English Plum Pudding
Hard and Brandy Sauces
Snow Pudding, soft custard
Hot Mince Pie
Apple Pie. Pineapple Jelly
Berncasteler Doctor Jelly
Fruit Cream
Sherry
¶ Fruit. Confectionery
Benedictine Ice Cream
¶ Cafe. Liqueurs.

The menu from the Royal Hotel, Saint John, for a 1901 Christmas dinner typical of leading hotels in the Maritimes at the end of the Victorian era.

have to do a lot of dexterous snapping not to burn their fingers."

Among adults, charades, singing around the piano, recitations and readings were popular. The newspapers and periodicals of the day provided lots of seasonal material, with poems and short stories, by local, though usually anonymous, writers who made many references to local history or scenery in the presentation of their Christmas material.

That there was plenty of "liquid refreshment" at both indoor and outdoor events over Christmas is not left to doubt by the era's papers, who seemed to take special delight in pointing out how many cases were brought to the courts on the next working day following both Christmas and New Year's, often comparing statistics with previous years, or nearby cities or towns. Halifax, with its many seamen on the streets, seems to have had a greater problem with public drinking than most areas. Just after Christmas Day of 1886, the *Morning Chronicle* reported at great length on the misadventures of two "grog drinkers" who had spent the day in the tavern and had missed the sailing of their ship, and "leaped into the icy water [of Halifax harbour] and attempted to overtake their ship by swimming." They were not successful and had to be fished out and dried out. This same paper lamented the fact that the bar rooms and churches were both open on Christmas Day, and one drew as many visitors as the other.

While the individual drinker might mar the enjoyment of the season for the immediate family, and his overindulgence might even disturb a few neighbours, his actions would never bring a widespread halt to holiday celebrations, as was the case when a smallpox scare or epidemic spread across the land. At no time was that more the case than in the November of 1885 on Prince Edward Island, when the *Charlottetown Daily Examiner* noted, "The city was thrown into a fever of excitement," and further that Dr. Jenkins had revealed "several cases of smallpox" in their midst.

Schools were immediately closed, church services were ordered cancelled, travel banned from town to town, strangers turned away from the train stations, ferry traffic across Charlottetown harbour halted, homes fumigated and clothing burnt, and the general population urged to get vaccinations, to avoid crowds, and to stay away from areas where the pox was known to have struck.

By 16 December deaths had occurred and many more were on the brink of passing to the other side. Merchants who were anxious to capture some holiday trade received permission to remain open despite the

The "Halifax Morning Chronicle" for December 1890 features sport, sentiment and toys fired from Santa's cannon.

panic. Reid Bros. advertised, "STARVATION PRICES DURING THE SMALLPOX EPIDEMIC," and explained that their clothing line had been fumigated and declared safe by local doctors.

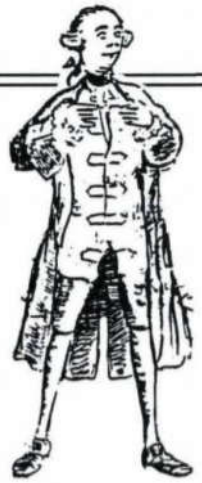
In true Christmas tradition, the Charlottetown residents donated linen, papers, preserves, fruit, books, so that those patients quarantined could have some joy in a joyless season.

As the epidemic eased, things got back to normal. The *Herald* noted on 23 December, "The weather today appears as though we are going to have good sleighing, which would be very desirable just now as the business of the country is flowing back to its accustomed channels. The large attendance at the market yesterday was an indicator that the confidence of the people is being restored as the smallpox has eased in our midst, we see no reason why business should not at once resume its usual proportions."

"It is hard to write or say anything new about Christmas," said a writer in the *Charlottetown Examiner* on Christmas Eve 1888. "It comes to us year after year," he continued, "bringing with it joy and gladness and often reconciliation to severed friends. Good nature and Christian charity prevail more than at any other season."

It is just as hard today to write anything new, even after the passage of another century, for Christmas today is not, as you have probably surmised by now, much different than it was, and certainly there is much in Christmas today that can be said to be "Old-Fashioned" even if we don't always realize it. ♦

David W. Goss keeps Christmas in the old fashioned way in Saint John, New Brunswick, where he lives and writes.



PRATFALLS

On the Paths of Glory

By Ian McCulloch

The small man gave a gasp as a bright water-colour portrait slipped out from between a sheaf of yellowing letters.

It was him! General James Wolfe! The piercing azure eyes and the carrot-coloured hair were unmistakable! But what was it doing amongst the papers of Isaac Barré? True, the gentleman had been Wolfe's adjutant at the Siege of Quebec in 1759, but he was no artist!

The small man examined it more closely. It was a remarkable likeness of Wolfe, obviously executed sometime while the general had been in Canada. Then a faint ink inscription at the bottom of the page caught his eye: "To Isaac Barré from his friend Geo: Townshend". Astonishing! The best portrait of Wolfe he had ever seen was drawn by one of the famous General's most bitter enemies!

Robert Wright had heard rumours of Townshend's reputation as a cartoonist, but he had not expected anything like this. Wright shook his head slowly in wonderment, then placed the portrait carefully into his small leather secretary. It was 1821 and Wolfe's first official biographer was ready to start work.

One of the earliest known cartoonists in Canada was a military officer, the Honourable George Townshend. He was one of General James Wolfe's three brigade commanders at the siege and battle of Quebec, 1759. During the campaign, he drew some very satirical and insubordinate cartoons of Wolfe, mostly lewd and lavatorial in nature. They offer us a fresh alternative view of the famous hero, pre-dating photojournalism by nearly two centuries.

Townshend by all accounts was a difficult customer. Wolfe, his nominal commander, was a commoner, but the pretentious, arrogant and artistic Townshend was the second son of the third Viscount Townshend and nephew of the powerful Duke of Newcastle. Wolfe had accepted Townshend with a reluctant show of grace. The red-haired commander's own choice had been Ralph Burton, an officer of proven North American ability.

Townshend's background and experience were primarily political before joining Wolfe's command, though he had served as a junior officer at the Battle of Dettingen. Undeniably quick-witted and clever, he was near a drummer boy who had had his head splattered by a cannonball, when an old soldier standing nearby had started to reassure the young officer, Townshend remarked: "I'm not afraid, thank you. I'm only astonished that a fellow with such a quantity of brains should be here."

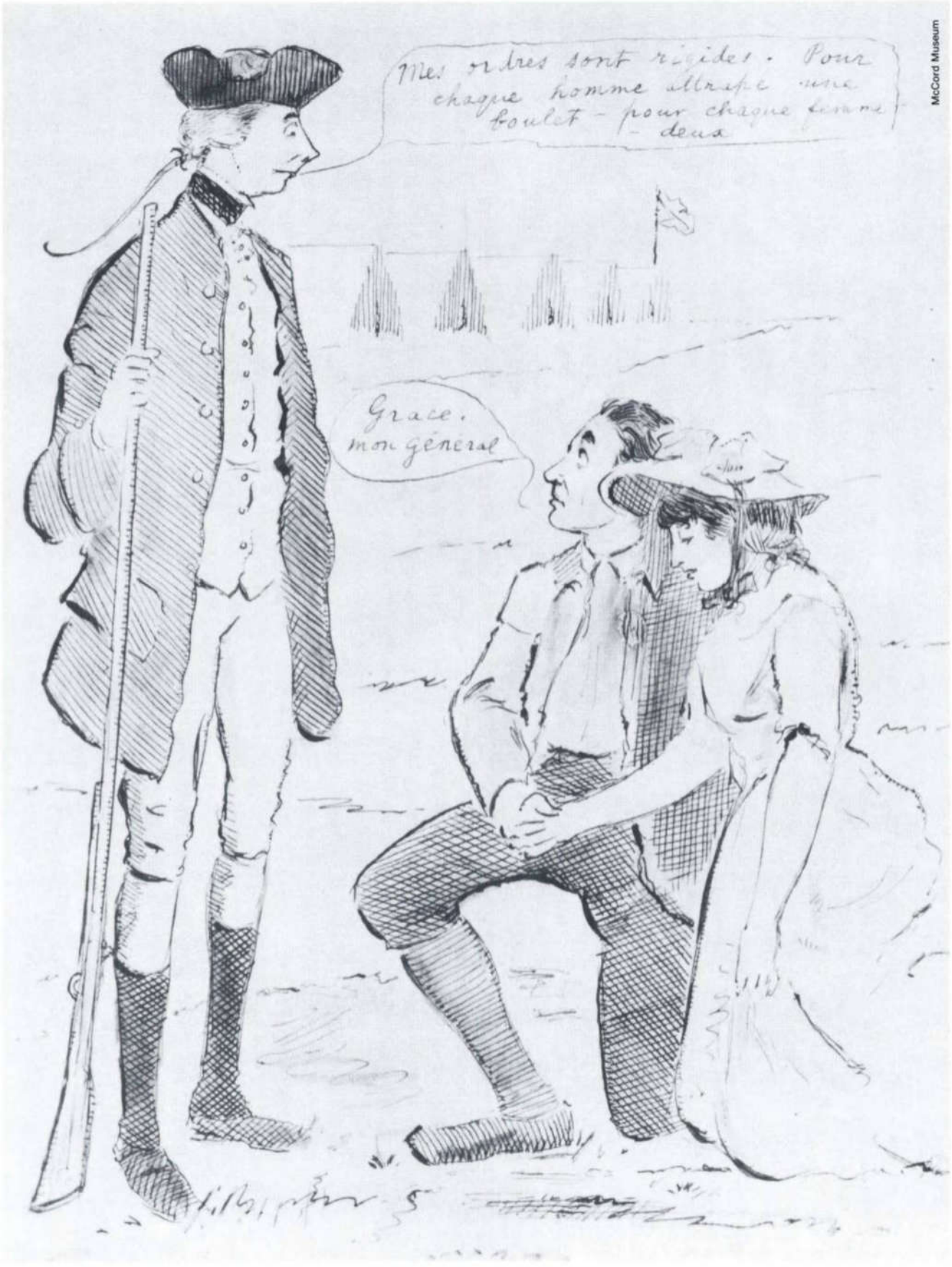
Eighteenth-century gossip Horace Walpole described the aristocratic artist to be of a "proud, sullen and contemptuous temperament", though Wolfe's aide-de-camp was less charitable. Captain James Bell recorded in his diary:

> [Townshend] had an inconstant mind, his line of life not directed by any first principles, and as he is exceedingly subject to very high and low spirits, his actions have a variegated colour, one with the appearance of excess of good nature, at other times of Bitterness, and as his favours are not directed by merit, he is always surrounded by the most indifferent subjects in the Army. He has a great deal of humour, well stained with bawdy, and may be esteemed an excellent Tavern acquaintance.

The cartoons that started to flow from Townshend's pen upon the arrival of Wolfe's army before Quebec in June 1759 were of two types: either a rough sketch or a highly finished product. It was the latter type, mostly mocking Wolfe's sexual prowess or his strict orders concerning latrines and camp discipline that were circulated widely in the officers' messes. These cartoons, no doubt, caused much raucous laughter and ribald fun at the expense of the stuffy commander. A British historian is of the opinion that the cartoons were "criminally irresponsible coming from the third in military command" and "tended to undermine confidence at the very time when it most needed building up".

It should be noted that Townshend regarded himself as fireproof. He was the self-same officer who, as a subaltern at Dettingen, had dared criticise His Majesty King George II when he felt the sovereign was making a nonsense of the battle's conclusion by letting the

Habitant: *Mercy, Mister General!*
Wolfe: *My orders are rigid. For every man caught, one ball — for every woman, two!*


Mes ordres sont rigides. Pour chaque homme attrapé une boulet - pour chaque femme - deux
Grace, mon général
McCord Museum

National Archives of Canada

Brigadier-General George Townshend.

enemy get away. Townshend reported to all and sundry: "The King halted and the scene of Action and military ardour was suddenly turned into a Court circle. His Majesty was congratulated by every military courtesan on horseback, on the glorious event!"

One rare drawing which stands above the rest of Townshend's back-biting portfolio is a startling watercolour likeness of James Wolfe. This Townshend gave to Wolfe's adjutant, Isaac Barré, who valued it all his life. Robert Wright, Wolfe's earliest biographer, acquired it in the nineteenth century and wrote across the top: "Though slight, this is the most convincing portrait of Wolfe I have ever seen!"

Townshend was Wolfe's most bitter critic during the Quebec campaign. This, to some degree, was fueled by the fact that the 32-year-old Commander had been handpicked by William Pitt, the political arch-rival of the cartoonist's uncle, the Duke of Newcastle. Prior to the famous battle fought on the Plains of Abraham, Wolfe had started a "scorched earth" policy, razing habitants' farms and crops in the correct belief that it would cause Canadien militiamen to desert. Townshend, spurred on by these "ungentlemanly" actions, as well as criticism from Wolfe on the layout of his brigade camp and the tragic news that his younger brother Roger had been killed at Ticonderoga with General Amherst's army, wrote bitterly to his wife:

I wonder if I shall have my share
We will not let one of them escape, my dear Isaac – the pretty ones will be punished at Head quarters
I understand you completely, Jemmy – oblige 'em in their weakest part. Egad
PROCLAMATION
NO MERCY TO CAPTIVES BEFORE QUEBECK

McCord Museum

Wolfe briefs his adjutant, Isaac Barré, on his plans for the pretty women of Quebec.

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IN THIS ISSUE

All prices include shipping and handling.
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Although slight this is the most convincing portrait of Wolfe I have seen. Cf. Thomas profile. C. Wright 1864.
To Isaac Barré
from his friend
Geo: Townshend

McCord Museum

The 1759 water-colour portrait of James Wolfe by George Townshend, presented by the artist to Isaac Barré.

> I never serv'd so disagreeable a Campaign. Our unequal Force has reduced our operations to a scene of Skirmishing, Cruelty and Devastation. It is War of the worst shape. A Scene I ought not be in . . . Genl. Wolf's health is but very bad. His Generalship in my poor opinion is not a bit better, this is only between us.

As already seen, Townshend's criticism of Wolfe was not merely a private matter. One cartoon circulating in the officers' mess before the Battle of Montmorency Falls, a month before the Plains battle, was intercepted by Wolfe. The General is reported to have angrily crumpled it, remarking that "more will be heard of this matter, but there is a battle to be fought!" (The offending cartoon is generally thought to be the one of Wolfe inspecting a latrine with a telescope entitled "More Disgraceful Laxity!" See page 18.)

The acrimonious relationship between Townshend and Wolfe remained constant until Wolfe's death on the Plains. The day before the final battle, most historians are in accord that Wolfe's three brigadiers (at Townshend's instigation) petitioned their Commander for more details on the battle plan, saying they had been insufficiently briefed and, therefore, could not be held accountable for any failure. Wolfe's outraged remarks at this eleventh hour "mutiny" were recorded by one of his aides:

> Mr. Wolfe said to his own Family [of staff officers] that the Brigadiers had brought him up the River and now flinch'd: he did not hesitate to say that two of them were cowards [Townshend and Monckton] and one a villain [Murray].

When Wolfe was killed at the outset of the battle, the second-in-command, Brigadier Robert Monckton, was wounded in the lung at almost the same time. George Townshend thus found himself in charge and responsible for finishing off the battle. Taking an inordinate amount of time to appreciate the tactical situation, and having never understood Wolfe's oft-stated strategical aim of destroying the French army, Townshend let the French regulars run away to fight again another day.

In Townshend's official dispatch to the War Office, he wrote of the "situation of things when I was told

McCord Museum

"More Disgraceful Laxity!" The exacting General Wolfe inspects latrines in this cartoon, said to have angered the hero of Quebec before the battle.

McCord Museum

Wolfe: *What depth is that latrine there?*
Habitant: *Twenty-five feet, Mr. General!*
Wolfe: *What? An inch per man! Not enough! We shall be engulfed by the first discharge! Keep digging!*

in Action that I commanded" in an almost apologetic vein:

> I immediately repaired to the Centre and finding the pursuit had put part of the Troops in Disorder, I formed them as soon as possible. Scarce was this effected when . . . . 2,000 men [under Bougainville] appeared in our Rear. I advanced two pieces of Artillery, and two Battalions towards him upon which he retired. You will not, I flatter myself, blame me for not quitting such advantageous Ground, and risking the Fate of so decisive a Day, by seeking a fresh Enemy posted perhaps in the very kind of Ground he could wish for, viz: Woods and Swamps.

Quebec surrendered to Townshend five days after the battle. In the dispatches home, Townshend especially commended the work of the Royal Navy but left out any sort of valediction, (conventional in those days) for the fallen Commander — Wolfe. Separately, in a flurry of letters home, he attempted to claim credit for Wolfe's decision to attack at the Foulon and the subsequent victory.

"We determined on 13th September to do what we ought to have done in the beginning," he wrote to the Speaker of the House of Commons, "but in military operations it is never too late to reform." In others, he criticized Wolfe's generalship, asking friends to show them to the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Newcastle and William Pitt. Then, afraid that Wolfe's staff and probably the naval commander-in-chief before Quebec, Admiral Saunders, would comment too freely on the brigadiers' opposition to Wolfe's final plan, Townshend decided he had better return home to defend himself.

In England, Townshend found that his intentional omission of any public expression of sorrow for the loss of Wolfe, now a hero of god-like proportions in the public eye, had exposed him to many unfavourable charges and much controversy. His venemous cartoons were circulated privately but, for the most part, were ignored by all in their rush to commemorate and deify the gallant Wolfe. Townshend, good politician that he was, wisely decided to drop his vendetta against his dead commander's memory.

In later life, George Townshend became a Field Marshal, an eminent politician and a marquis of the realm. When contacted by James Murray in 1767 trying to enlist his old comrade-in-arms' support for renewed attacks upon Wolfe's reputation, Townshend's laconic reply was:

> I will confess to you that if the Expedition of Quebec lay upon my Table, and that of [Tangiers] (of which I certainly know less) I should naturally be led to take up the latter first!

Townshend's irreverent cartoons have survived to this day and are preserved for Canadians in the large

McCord Museum

***Women:** Ah, Mr. General, if Quebec falls will you save the women?*
***Wolfe:** Ah my pretties, that depends on more than just written petitions! Send me 50 beautiful virgins immediately and we shall see!*

McCord Museum

"Higher than before!" Wolfe is measured by his adjutant.

Wolfeiana collection of the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal. There, one can see first-hand George Townshend's personal postscripts on an important figure and personality in North American history. ♦

Lieutenant Colonel Ian McCullough is Commanding Officer of the First Battalion, The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada in Montreal, Quebec.

Learning From War Crimes

The Fate of Tecumseh

By Dennis Duffy

War Crimes! What could be more familiar events in our nearly-exhausted century? Atrocities, great and small, fill contemporary history. Contemplating savagery has become basic to our understanding of social conflict. Already, even though the current set of killings continues, a commission is investigating war crimes in the Balkans.

What we now call war crimes — massacre, mutilation, rapes, especially when visited upon noncombatants and prisoners — seem as ancient as organized warfare itself. The very fact that we consider actions so closely associated with the waging of war to be criminal indicates our battered hope that the unspeakable can be waged in a "humane" manner.

The frontier wars that shaped this continent are rich in terrible incidents. Settler and aboriginal societies alike accused the other of such crimes. Francis Parkman's *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* suggested nearly a century and a half ago that there is nothing new or exotic about germ warfare. General Jeffrey Amherst's alleged 1763 order to distribute among the native tribes, blankets used by smallpox victims may still shock, but should not surprise us.

Considering a war crime committed on Canadian soil tells us something more. The flaying of the corpse of Tecumseh (in order to produce razor-strop souvenirs) after his death at Moraviantown on 5 October 1813, still has the power to shock. Once that feeling wears off, we can begin to understand how investigating the crime can teach us the way in which history gets written. Moreover, considering the evidence also demonstrates what we should never forget: the ultimate history text that we read is the one that we "write" ourselves. That is, it is finally up to us as individuals to determine which version of events we come to trust, and to derive from that version whatever lesson we want.

Mutilating the corpse of a defeated military leader in order to produce domestic appliances blends evil with banality in a way our century has taught us to recognize. The atrocity foretells the Nazi manufacture of lampshades from the skin of death-camp victims, that combination of atrocity with practicality that is so unsettling to think about.

Whatever prints the deed upon the mind, its resonance for Canadians stems from the fact that it involves the Shawnee warrior Tecumseh, who played a major role in keeping Canadian that very soil on which the crime was committed. For reasons that I will outline, the exact details of the crime remain conjectural. Even so, investigating the charge helps us to understand exactly what we choose to remember, and why.

Artist F.H. Brigden's interpretation of the warrior Tecumseh, from the collection of the National Archives of Canada.

First, the facts. No one disputes that Tecumseh died fighting the American forces (and their *own* Indian allies) at what Canadians know as the Battle of Moraviantown in Upper Canada on 5 October 1813. With Tecumseh perished the pan-tribal confederacy that he had organized. Tecumseh's hatred of the advancing American settlers proved stronger than his well-founded mistrust of British colonial officers. His deployment of his forces enabled the British and Indian alliance to win initial victories at Michilimackinac and Detroit. The long-term effect of those successes (botched in the short term) was to keep the conflict from being the unmitigated disaster for (what is now) Canada that it had promised to be. Thus, 1812 becomes a significant part of our self-image as a nation more warred against than warring, but defensible for all that.

Tecumseh's death caused greater rejoicing among the victors, largely Kentucky militia volunteers, than did the scattering of the outnumbered, poorly-led, and dispirited British regulars. It meant that the native-American resistance to dispossession at the hands of settlers had finally collapsed as far as Kentucky and the Old Northwest were concerned.

Rumsey dumsey, rumsey dumsey,
Colonel Johnson killed Tecumseh!

That slogan took the Kentucky militia leader at Moraviantown to the Vice-Presidency in 1836. Richard M. Johnson's elaborate monument in the old hilltop cemetery in the Kentucky state capital of Frankfort, wisely does not credit him with Tecumseh's death. It only depicts him slaying a Native American in battle. The popular tradition, however, led Johnson to power.

A sojourner in Frankfort, Kentucky, after the Battle of the Thames (as the winners called it) brings us to the question of the mutilation of Tecumseh's corpse. This involuntary visitor had fought at Moraviantown, and been taken prisoner. John Richardson (1796-1852) became Canada's first native-born novelist. His Gothic thriller *Wacousta* (1832), based on Pontiac's 1763 uprising, is still studied by serious students of Canadian literature. In 1813, however, he was an adolescent grown old before his time, who had served with the British forces as a "gentleman volunteer." He was defending the interests of that fur-trading world in which his maternal grandfather, John Askin, played a major role. He had already seen prisoners butchered and men die because of other men's stupidity. Their bodies looked the same as those who died because of other men's brilliance.

John Richardson had been allowed by Isaac Brock to raise the British colours over captured Detroit. His other hero, Tecumseh, had gone into his last battle wearing an ostrich plume given him by a relative of Richardson's. Years later, long after his Kentucky cap-

John Richardson: An epic poem.

tivity had ended, Richardson opened his writing career with an 1828 epic poem on Tecumseh. A stanza of that poem consists of a series of blanks, indicating that the events covered there are too horrible to publish. The author then graciously satisfies his audience's curiosity with a note informing them that the blanks refer to the flaying of the hero's corpse by the conquerors. Richardson's subsequent history of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada repeats the accusation.

Did John Richardson actually witness the flaying? No. How can we trust him? Well, we have other witnesses who state the same. As well, everything that we know about the battle's times and circumstances indicates at least the probability of Richardson's accusation.

We know that years spent in wresting their land from the native tribes had made the Kentuckians adept in frontier warfare. They scalped their foe, and had long since abandoned any distinction between warriors and non-combatants. Decades of no-holds-barred frontier fighting had dissolved any allegiance to European conventions of humane warfare.

Nonetheless, they could never forgive their opponents when they replied in kind. Kentucky mounted riflemen charged into the enemy lines at Moraviantown with the battle cry, "Remember the Raisin!" They were calling to mind a massacre of Kentucky prisoners-of-war by the native warriors. In direct contravention of the terms of surrender, the regular British forces had abandoned the American wounded to the native allies in the winter before Moraviantown. They had done so at Frenchtown (now Monroe, Michigan), along the banks of the River Raisin. Relatives of John Richardson had witnessed this, and thought no good would come of it. Richardson himself nearly landed in trouble when he was almost caught unwittingly wearing the boots of a victim of the massacre.

So we know that the Kentuckians, who liked to brag of themselves as half-horse and half-alligator, had their blood up. Few native prisoners were taken after Moraviantown. The British troops, whose leader Procter had fled (he had done the same at the Raisin), surrendered almost *en masse*. Moraviantown was a settlement of non-combatant "praying Indians" who had reached Upper Canada with the help of Richardson's grandfather, John Askin. These converts to the pacifist Christianity of the Moravian missionaries had fled to Upper Canada after being massacred by American settlers. They watched Moraviantown torched after the battle. Mothers threw their infants into the Thames for fear of the raging Americans.

If these circumstances tend to corroborate John Richardson's account, so would hindsight. Think of those Vietnam photos of grunts wearing chains made of human ears.

The writer Richardson was not the only one to hang on to his early memories and make subsequent use of them. On 15 December 1856, a far greater writer, Nathaniel Hawthorne, sat at his desk as U.S. Consul in Liverpool. He had had the good sense to write the campaign biography of an old college chum, Franklin Pierce, who had been elected president. Hawthorne's finest contributions to literature, *The Scarlet Letter* and his many tales, were behind him.

His caller that day was a seventy year-old Kentuckian down on his luck who needed passage money homeward. Mr. Richardson (no relation to the novelist, by then dead) claimed to have been at the Thames, and told Hawthorne of the conversion of the great Tecumseh's skin into razor strops, which the novelist entered into his notebook without comment.

Participation in the Battle of the Thames continued to be the coinage of the patriotism trade. In 1862, one Tarrance Kirby attempted to spend his accumulated capital in convincing President Lincoln to release Kirby's Confederate grandsons from Union prison camps. Not only had Kirby been at the Thames, but he "hope [helped] kill Tecumseh and *hope skin him* and brot Two pieces of his yellow hide home with me to my Mother & Sweet Harts after a few days rest [emphasis in the original]." We have no idea how the women in his life received his souvenirs, and certainly we have no proof that he did what he said. It seems significant nonetheless that a petitioner would feel that participation in that kind of activity could lift his request from the bottom of the pile.

National Archives of Canada

A desperate moment in the Battle of Moraviantown, 5 October 1813.

It is true that you can find the odd modern, professional historian who regards the tale of the flaying as apocryphal. Against them, we must array the widespread evidence, both contemporary and contextual, for what we would now term the war crime.

Or should we? Because at this point another of history's ironies comes to the fore. Perhaps the lengthiest present-day sifting of contemporary accounts of the fate of Tecumseh's corpse occurs in Allan W. Eckert's recent biography (1992) of the Shawnee, *A Sorrow in My Heart*. Eckert, a popular historian who relies almost exclusively on contemporary and original accounts for his evidence, has the habit of narrating in the manner of an omniscient novelist. Even when his inferences seem logical and fully warranted, they tend to disconcert a reader accustomed to modern, academic historiography. Nor can contemporary accounts be trusted merely because they are contemporary; compare the accounts of a traffic accident as witnessed by three bystanders.

Still, what Eckert's exhaustive analysis indicates is that no one, and certainly no non-native, left any reliable account of the disposition of Tecumseh's dead body. The strop peddlers may not only have been vile, but deluded and/or fraudulent as well. Contemporary statements do lean toward one eventuality, namely that the body was carried by Tecumseh's native followers to an unknown resting place. His fellows knew what indignities awaited the body of their leader, for they had fought these particular opponents often before. Whom the tribesmen could not keep alive, they would secretly inter, and with dignity. They seem to have succeeded. The battlefield marshes were long ago drained, and turned into farmland. The battle monument, not far from what is now Thamesville, Ontario, discloses no resting place for the hero.

Whatever corpse(s) were skinned, the grisly mementoes of victory probably consisted of nothing that was mortal of the great native leader. Would that have lowered their value? How many splinters of the True Cross could medieval Europe hold?

What does my amateur's investigation of all these investigations lead me to believe? Depending upon the details that your version of history includes, you can choose between the tragic/heroic and the ironic interpretation of events. The tragic/heroic focuses upon the lost leader and the death of his cause, followed by the unspeakable indignity visited upon his corpse. The ironic would emphasize instead how few of our actions resemble what we consider them to be. And from that flows a deeper irony, one that ultimately heartens us. That irony is that of the "simple savages" in their chivalry and pride outwitting their crude opponents. The bottom line in the settling of accounts for the dead of the River Raisin represents instead the venal merchandising of fake trophies.

Finally, you may choose not to interpret events at all, and list without comment a series of events, followed by another list of conjectures about their meaning that have occupied other investigators. This last version of history has of course eluded me. I suspect that it eludes most people who care about the world that we make.

Ultimately, a detective on the trail of this crime shifts from an heroic to a democratic narrative of events. A crime took place. But it was the crime against the Unknown Warrior rather than one perpetrated upon a Leader. When it comes to heroic morals, all the Republic's mounted riflemen couldn't put rumsey-dumsey together again. ♦

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FEAR SWEEPS NATION

Fifth-Column Crisis

By Larry Hannant

Over the past four centuries wars have often severely shaken Canadian society. The most recent internal breakdown of confidence was one of the most frightening, although perhaps the briefest. This was the period of intense fear in May and June of 1940 when Canadians came face to face with Hitler's *blitzkreig*. After eight months of "phony war" Canadians realized with a shock that they were in a very deadly struggle. For those two months, in a moment of utter collective panic, Canadians suddenly doubted whether they were equal to the task. In their hysteria they turned upon an entirely imaginary internal enemy in a paroxysm of panic that has come to be called Canada's fifth-column crisis.

That spring brought terrifying modern war to Canada's doorstep. A people who thought they lived in a fireproof house thousands of miles from any blaze suddenly grasped how close the war was. In the crisis, the country descended into a collective psychosis which was alarmingly intense.

Until April 1940 the war on the western front was marked mostly by tedium. Thoughout the previous fall and winter British and French troops fired little more than hostile glances at the German *Wehrmacht*. That *sitzkreig* ignited into full-scale war in early April when Hitler's forces invaded Denmark and Norway. The latter survived weeks, the former mere hours. The same fate was in store for Holland, Belgium and France. Holland fell just five days after Hitler's first attack on 10 May. Belgium survived 18 days. And five weeks after their first assault, German troops were marching triumphantly through Paris, with the British army barely escaping capture *en masse* at Dunkirk.

Canadians were suddenly staring into the face of catastrophe. On 12 June Justice Minister Ernest Lapointe warned that the country "could no longer rely upon the Allied armies and the British fleet for protection against invasion." Britain looked to be on the brink of doom, and if it fell, Canada — the only western hemisphere country to declare war in September 1939 — would face the entire force of the German armed might.

In the emergency, people's thoughts turned to a threat which had been nagging for years. This was the fear of spies, subversion and sabotage. During the First World War the German military instigated sabotage in the United States and in Canada, although the single incident here was more farce than threat. During the 1930s, sabotage assumed a more somber aura, promising imminent terror. Throughout Europe and North America anxiety about sabotage was a staple of popular literature like Richard Rowan's apocalyptic sagas *Spies and the Next War, The Story of Secret Service* and *Secret Agents Against America*. It was also grist for a veritable spy-film mill operated by Alfred Hitchcock. In the three years from 1934 to 1936 Hitchcock issued four films on the troubling topic, *The Man Who Knew Too Much, The 39 Steps, The Secret Agent* and *Sabotage*.

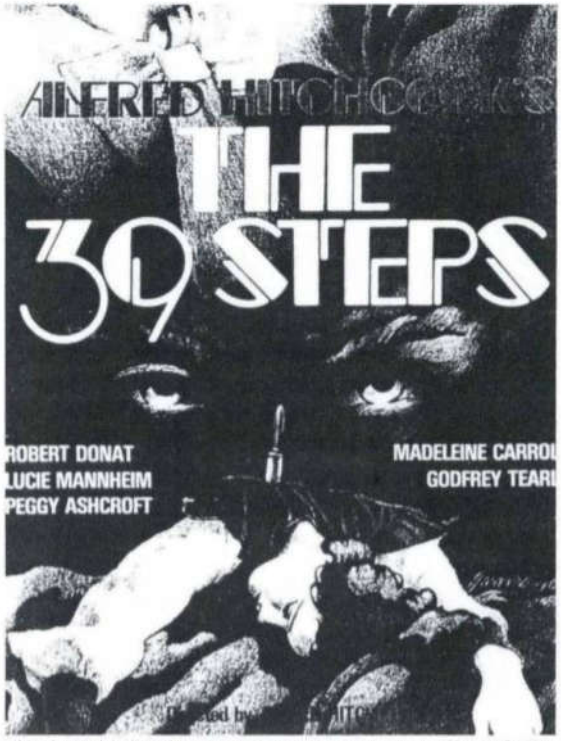
The phrase "fifth column" invaded the popular vocabulary during the Spanish Civil War of 1936 to 1939. General Francisco Franco boasted that he had four columns advancing upon Madrid and a fifth column of fascist supporters inside the city ready to launch an attack. This fear of an unseen internal enemy was a phobia symptomatic of the troubled depression years, when international tension grew inexorably. Saboteurs came to be seen as people who were trained to perpetrate violence against their own citizens in order to aid a foreign power.

The Germans' lightning conquest of the western European countries turned this long-simmering fear of internal saboteurs and fifth columnists into a boiling cauldron of public alarm in Canada. What else could explain those astonishing victories but the presence of enemy agents inside the target nations?

Mass meetings throughout Canada in May and June called for sweeping action against "enemy aliens" and

suspected fifth columnists. In Vancouver rallies of 7,000 on 26 May and 5,000 on 28 May demanded that the federal government organize veterans to assist the police in fighting "espionage or sabotage, whether of word or deed, or in any other role," and urged the government to bar "aliens of enemy birth . . . from employment in any government or municipal service or in key industries, and discharge those at present employed." In Calgary a crowd of 7,000 demanded internment of Germans and other measures to combat the threat of fifth columnists. Fear of possible rioting there led Police Chief David Ritchie to close the Ukrainian Labour Farm Temple Association office and the Russian Workers and Farmers Club. In Windsor an assembly of 3,000 ex-servicemen called for protection such as the registration of every person in Canada and internment of all enemy aliens. In Toronto 50,000 ex-servicemen rallied on 9 June to demand that the federal government act decisively to put the country on a total war footing. The most effective fifth columnists in Canada, Major the Reverend H.F. Woodcock told the crowd, "are those in positions of authority who have adopted half-hearted purposes, thus bringing only a fraction of our power to bear on the problem of winning a war." A foolhardy man in the throng who dared to voice objection was set upon by the mob and beaten. In Montreal a gathering of 7,000 at Atwater Market on 27 May heard Colonel J.J. Creelman declare that the peacetime maxim of allowing 100 guilty persons to go free rather than jailing a single innocent must be abandoned. In wartime, all suspects must be arrested, he asserted.

Inflamed by the rhetoric and the disastrous situation in Europe, some Canadians took the law into their own hands. Vandals wrecked the businesses of Italian-born merchants in Toronto on 10 June after Mussolini ordered his military to attack the then-supine France.



Alfred Hitchcock's film version of John Buchan's thriller "The 39 Steps" made many aware of the spy menace.

Some people of Italian or German background, especially those in the public employ, were fired without cause.

Authorities issued a bewildering flurry of conflicting instructions to citizens concerning what to do about people they suspected of sabotage or disloyalty. "Tell Police of Any Sabotage Suspicion" the *Toronto Star* advised, printing a statement issued by the Ontario Premier and Attorney General. City of Toronto officials also urged people to come forward with information about disloyal public employees. Mayor Ralph Day promised that they would face "instant dismissal".

On the other hand, federal politicians and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police laboured to hold back the tidal wave of fear and reports about suspected saboteurs. In the House of Commons Justice Minister Lapointe appealed for Canadians "to remain calm and not permit themselves to be stampeded into hysteria by 'fifth column' rumours." Repeating rumours itself became a suspect activity. The British Columbia Attorney General asked the federal government to make it an offence under the Defence of Canada Regulations to spread rumours. The government, forsaking the opportunity to intern half the population of Canada, wisely spurned the suggestion. The federal Director of Public Information, continuing the campaign against rumour-mongering, issued a statement advising people

National Archives of Canada

Montreal crowds watch busses containing suspected fifth columnists who are being taken to temporary detention centres.

that "the next time you quote the German radio, go and give yourself up to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police — you are a fifth columnist."

More alleged fifth columnists was the last thing the RCMP wanted. It already had work enough on its plate, and it issued appeals to try to calm the public frenzy. The Mounties believed that they had nipped in the bud any potential sabotage through the internment of some 200 Nazi sympathizers in September 1939. They dismissed the public fears in the spring of 1940 as the product of overworked imaginations. The force warned in the pages of its secret *Intelligence Bulletin* that "Police forces are swamped with a flood of complaints regarding alleged subversive activities. Switch-boards are jammed with messages to the same effect. A well-meaning but ill-informed public, particularly veterans and their organizations, are letting their imagination run riot. Old incidents, second-hand gossip, a German-sounding name, a Teutonic haircut, almost anything now assumes a sinister aspect." By late May the RCMP was so overwhelmed by telephone reports of fifth columnists that it appealed to people to write letters detailing their complaints rather than calling the police. In Montreal the RCMP urged citizens to stop denouncing aliens as fifth columnists in public and in their homes.

For a time the RCMP's warnings had little effect, and the fingerpointing and denunciations continued. More ominous still, the *Toronto Star* reported that an anonymous vigilante gang had formed in that city which was "sworn to attack, harass and smash the alien enemy danger in our midst." The RCMP was particularly concerned about such overzealous volunteer troopers, labelling them menacing "sixth columns."

The atmosphere of paranoia led to dubious security expedients like air-raid blackouts in Toronto and demands from the fire chief of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, for protection from sabotage and incendiary air raids. In Toronto, the League of Patriotic Action unmasked a suspected fifth columnist with a dangerous weapon — homing pigeons. Police promptly interned the hapless fellow, and his birds. Civilian Protection Committees were formed whose members were given the weighty responsibility of patrolling pool rooms, taverns and the magazine stalls of corner drug stores on the lookout for fifth columnists. These might have included readers of the *Saturday Evening Post*, which the *Globe and Mail* wanted banned from Canada because it "has pursued an anti-British campaign since the outbreak of the war."

In this supercharged climate, "sabotage", "hysteria" and "fifth-column" were the epithets of the hour,

spat from many tongues. Lapointe and Air Minister C.G. (Chubby) Power publicly chastised Ontario Premier Mitchell Hepburn as "reckless and impetuous" for alarming the public by claiming that Nazi sympathizers in the United States were preparing to invade Ontario. Even the *Globe and Mail*, which throughout June 1940 insisted that authorities deal with the sabotage threat, labelled the premier's story "hysteria."

Accusations of sabotage and fifth-column behaviour flew back and forth across the floor of the House of Commons. Power charged the Conservatives with sabotage because one Member of Parliament insisted that the minister declare categorically whether or not the Blenheim aircraft, which was being produced in Canada, was obsolete. Indeed, Power thought such behaviour merited internment: "If my colleague, the minister of justice, were carrying on the work as it should be carried on, he would intern the 'fifth column' over there." Liberal MP J.G. Ross from Moose Jaw declared that although there had been no sabotage by enemy agents there had been "repeated sabotage by men in high places, for instance Premier Hepburn of Ontario." (Although Hepburn was a Liberal, there was no love lost between him and the federal Liberals led by William Lyon Mackenzie King.)

For their part, the Conservatives invoked accusations of sabotage no more judiciously. Condemning the King government for failing to prepare the country for war, Nova Scotia MP Victor Quelch charged in the House that "for five years the [King] government deliberately sabotaged the life of this country." Conservative leader Richard B. Hanson applied the accusation to the head of the Inglis plant, J.E. Hahn, who, he said, was "carrying on a system of sabotage of organized labor" through his harsh regime in the plants manufacturing Bren guns and other munitions.

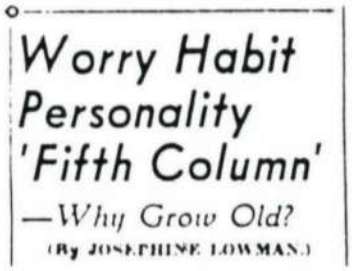
Waterloo South MP Karl Homuth told the House on 27 May that "There is a real fear on the part of people. There are a great many of these enemies at large in Canada." He called for the internment of suspects who, he said, could later be given an opportunity to prove their innocence. His remarks also reiterated a popular belief that registration of all citizens would help ease public concern by allowing for a check on subversives. Vancouver East MP Angus MacInnis presented a communication from the mayor of Vancouver reporting "considerable feeling . . . against enemy aliens and enemy sympathizers." The mayor added that "unless there is an assurance from the federal government that adequate measures are being taken to cope with subversive activities of such people, citizens may organize for that purpose."

Among the leading figures who seized the sabotage issue, none was more driven than Ontario Fire Marshal William J. Scott. Scott's position kept him in close communication with the Director and Assistant Direc-

CARELESS TALK BRINGS TRAGEDY IN WARTIME
1
THE SOLDIER TOLD HIS SWEETHEART (ALL ABOUT THE TROOP TRAIN)
2
THE SWEETHEART TOLD HER FATHER
3
THE FATHER TALKED AT HIS CLUB (WHERE A SPY OVERHEARD)
4
THE SPY INSTRUCTED THE SABOTEUR
5
THE SABOTEUR WRECKED THE TRAIN

Toronto 5th Columnist Caught Homing Pigeons Give Him Away
A homing pigeon "fifth columist" has been interned and his birds confiscated by the R.C.M.P. The German-born resident of Toronto was taken into custody 24 hours after authorities were notified, according to a spokesman for the League of Patriotic Action. The unit is planning a "house-to-house" organization by blocks to uncover subversive activities in the eastern part of the city.
In one week 19 Germans in the city were interned. Many of them were store owners and holders of valuable property, it was learned. They were kept in the Don Jail pending removal to an internment camp. The "Mounties" are having a busy time these days delving into the deluge of information pouring in from patriotic citizens.
Toronto Star

tor of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the United States, J. Edgar Hoover and Edward Tamm respectively. Scott's prestige as fire marshal in the province with the greatest concentration of wartime industry, and his ideological affinity with Hoover and Tamm, helped him to bask in the reflected prestige of the FBI. Scott reciprocated by feeding them information about developments in Canada. The connection added considerably to Scott's influence and provided him with delectable secrets about "incendiary bombs and other infernal machines" which he recounted in a frenzied round of sermons. The FBI also provided models of incendiary devices disguised as pencils and cigars, while Scott repaid the debt by sending the FBI medals which had been seized from Canadian Communists who had earned them by excelling at signing up members or newspaper subscribers.


Worry Habit Personality 'Fifth Column'
—Why Grow Old?
(By JOSEPHINE LOWMAN.)

"Globe and Mail" columnist Josephine Lowman fought the "fifth column" state of mind.

As a conduit of sabotage tales and lore between the United States and Canada, Scott helped to generalize experience from one country to the other. His purpose in speaking and writing about sabotage was not just to alert Canadians to its possibility. He also spoke frequently in the United States and sought to put a scare into Americans by distributing "some Canadian war propaganda along the lines of what the Germans did to them last time when they were at peace [1914-1917], and what they can expect the Germans, and probably the Communists, also to do now." Scott was also a persistent advocate of security screening of war plant employees, beginning his campaign in an October 1939 War Emergency Bulletin, which he issued to thousands of corporations, government departments and police forces in Canada, the United States and Britain.

In June the tumult peaked, then began to decline. Two bold steps by the federal government that month calmed citizens by meeting their demands for action against suspected enemy agents and active prosecution of the war. On 5 June the government banned Nazi and Communist organizations and began rounding up Communists and Fascists sympathetic to Italy. On 18 June, just two days after France capitulated to Germany, King introduced a bill for national registration in the House of Commons. Everyone over the age of 16 would have to register with the government. The National Resources Mobilization Act, which imposed registration, was passed swiftly in Parliament, and in August 1940 the registration was accomplished. The King government finally appeared to be taking the decisive measures for total war which the dire situation required.

Within weeks the popular hysteria had greatly dissipated. Already by July Josephine Lowman's personal health column in the *Globe and Mail* was parodying the widespread fear, saying that "one of the strongest fifth columns is the worry habit." Excessive worrying is a form of self-imposed psychological sabotage, she advised. By the end of 1940 the issue was almost gone from the pages of daily newspapers. In articles from Europe, "fifth column" began to take on a positive ring, describing the sabotage perpetrated by the resistance movements in countries occupied by the Germans. One signal of the calmer atmosphere in March 1941 was the fact that the *Globe and Mail*, which had frequently criticized the government for complacency in the spring of 1940, was now complaining editorially about an overreaction, saying that the federal government was running roughshod over civil liberties.

In addition, the rhetorical excess itself probably helped to still the hysteria. During the troubled year of 1940 — and indeed throughout the entire war — there were virtually no actual incidents of sabotage, and certainly no organized sabotage campaign to sustain the rampant passion. Extravagant claims of threats from enemy agents, therefore, must have begun to appear outlandish.

The fifth-column panic of 1940 was shortlived, but for the two months in which the fever raged Canadians revealed themselves to be capable of hysteria in an emergency. This episode points to an aspect of the national character which is less flattering than what Canadians like to portray. ◆

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Canada's Forgotten Railway Tycoon

By Gavin Murphy

An irony of North American railway development is that the greatest American builder was Canadian and two famous Canadian railroaders were American.

James Jerome Hill, a Canadian from rural Ontario, was one of the original directors of the Canadian Pacific Railway. He resigned in 1883 to forge a route from Chicago to the Pacific Ocean through the northwestern United States with the Great Northern Railway. A decade later he was company president. The *Empire Builder*, the famous Great Northern train now run by Amtrak, is named for him.

Sir William Cornelius Van Horne, who began his railroading career with the Illinois Central Railway as a 14-year-old telegraph operator, came to Canada in 1882 to complete the construction of the Canadian Pacific transcontinental railway. This he did and was named CP president in 1888 for his efforts.

Charles Melville Hays was lured away from the Wabash Railway in 1895 to become general manager of the Grand Trunk Railway Company of Canada. He was named vice-president in 1901 and president in 1909.

Hays was a prime architect of the great Canadian railway expansion when two transcontinental lines were built to compete with Canadian Pacific, resulting in Canada's having more miles of track per capita than any nation on earth.

Little is known about Hays, a larger-than-life character and Canadian railway legend. His tragic death in the 1912 R.M.S. *Titanic* disaster and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 essentially ended this colourful and free-spending period of Canadian history.

Charles Melville Hays was born in Rock Island, Illinois, on 16 May 1856. The family moved to St. Joseph, Missouri, shortly after his birth. He was educated at the St. Joseph High School and the Montana Academy. He joined "the road" in the office of the superintendent of the Missouri Pacific Railway at the age of 17. Hays was identified early in his career as a rising star because of his great energy and enthusiasm. He married Clara, daughter of William H. Gregg of St. Louis, in October, 1881.

In 1884 he moved to the Wabash, St. Louis and Pacific Railway as secretary to the general manager. Two years later he became assistant manager and then general manager of the railway's western branch. Hays was appointed general manager of the entire Wabash system following an 1889 reorganization. Five years later he was elected vice-president. The meteoric climb up the ladder continued in 1895 when the directors of Grand Trunk looked to him for help. Ironically, one of those who recommended Hays to Grand Trunk was financier J.P. Morgan, whose International Mercantile Marine Company later controlled the White Star Line, owners of *Titanic*.

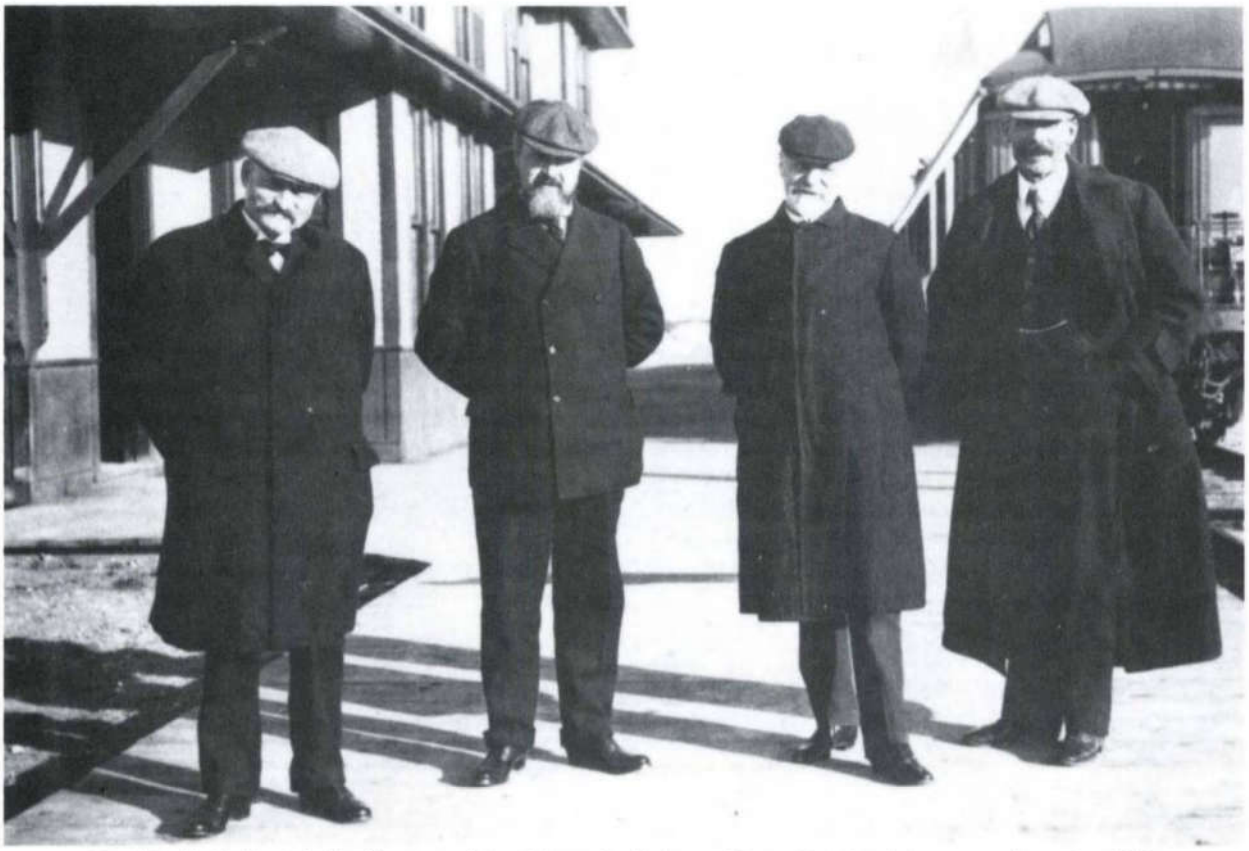
Grand Trunk was financed by British capital. The board of directors met in London, England, and decisions affecting the road were made overseas.

This arrangement presented problems. Company directors were never fully aware of the day-to-day problems of running a Canadian railway. In an effort to improve efficiency, General Manager L.J. Seargeant moved to England to serve as board advisor. Grand Trunk then invited Hays to fill the vacant position.

The *Railway Age Gazette* said Hays was "very self-possessed, seldom showing irritation or anger, and his capacity for work seemed unlimited". A stocky man with a neat beard and keen eyes, he was dubbed "the Little American". His first priority after moving to Montreal was to improve the balance sheet for Grand Trunk's British shareholders. While rebuilding the railway might have dismayed lesser men, Hays accepted the challenge with his legendary enthusiasm.

His was an open-door policy. No detail escaped his critical eye. He hired many Americans and imposed a faster, more informal style. Always the first into the office, he was a tireless manager, listening to everyone from colleagues to engine drivers. When trains were late he demanded an explanation.

His experience and contacts with American railways helped Grand Trunk sign advantageous agreements



Grand Trunk officials, including Hays (second from left), on the platform at Rivers, Manitoba, during a tour of inspection, 1910.

with connecting roads in the U.S.A. He leased the Toronto-Hamilton line to Canadian Pacific on favourable terms. He built elevators at Montreal and Portland, Maine, to attract the lucrative grain trade. (Portland is the closest ocean port to Eastern Canada and Grand Trunk coveted its use in winter when the St. Lawrence River is frozen.)

New car-shop facilities were built in London, Ontario, the Niagara Bridge was double-tracked and Montreal's famous Victoria Bridge was enlarged.

Hays resigned from Grand Trunk in early 1901 to become president of the Southern Pacific Railway. He left that position a few months later, returning to Canada as Grand Trunk's second vice-president and general manager. His aggressive management style resulted in an impressive turnaround for the company. A £370,000 deficit at the time he joined Grand Trunk became a £673,000 surplus for 1902.

There was a need for a Grand Trunk transcontinental railway due to the tremendous growth in Western Canada. Hays knew that competitors such as CP and the Canadian Northern Railway, also planning a transcontinental line, would drive Grand Trunk out of business unless action was taken.

The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, a subsidiary of Grand Trunk, was incorporated in 1903 to complete a route to the Pacific Ocean. Elected company president in 1905, Hays was largely responsible for pushing the railway through to its West Coast terminus at Prince Rupert, British Columbia. He said Prince Rupert would prosper as the closest North American port to Asia and promised a trans-Pacific shipping company. It was to be a model town and the first in Canada planned on paper before any substantial construction. Even David H. Hays, brother of Charles Melville, moved there to serve as sole agent for Grand Trunk Pacific's real estate division. A stately 450 room hotel, designed by the famous architect Francis M. Rattenbury, was also planned. Prince Rupert's prosperity was so closely linked to the railway that when Grand Trunk Pacific failed in 1919, the town became a virtual backwater. Neither the shipping company nor the hotel were ever realized.

Hays inspected the line's progress regularly, along with the other senior Grand Trunk executives. The eastern section from Winnipeg, Manitoba, to Moncton, New Brunswick, a distance of 1,800 miles, was to be built by the federal government and leased to Grand Trunk Pacific. The entire system was called the National Transcontinental Railway.

Hays advised the builders of the Imperial Government Railways of Japan and was awarded the Order

of the Rising Sun in 1907. His contribution to Canadian railway development was not overlooked. He was offered a knighthood in 1910 but declined the honour as acceptance would require the forfeiture of American citizenship.

Like Van Horne before him, Hays saw more to railways than just trains. He envisaged grand hotels and railway stations situated at key points along the line to complement the trains. Canadian Pacific had shown that hotels such as Quebec City's Chateau Frontenac and the Banff Springs resort in the Canadian Rockies were popular and profitable business ventures. So a chain of Grand Trunk luxury hotels would be built, with the flagship to be located in Ottawa.

The Ottawa Terminals Railway Company was incorporated in April 1907 for the purpose of constructing a new hotel and railway station. Hays was named president, with funding provided by Grand Trunk. An attractive French Gothic style hotel would be built in the centre of the city, with the station directly across the street and connected by an underground tunnel. An early supporter was Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who saw this project as a way to add prestige to Canada's capital. Both buildings were to be built within sight of Parliament Hill.

Hays also required the support of Ottawa city council. "I have never been to Ottawa without thinking that the approach to the city should be an impressive one; one which would welcome people to our nation's Capital", he told council. The plan was to build a Beaux Arts style railway station and a magnificent hotel named the Chateau Laurier. This was an unusual distinction for Sir Wilfrid as his Liberal government was still in power. It may have been his reward for early support of the scheme and Grand Trunk generally.

The city agreed to the proposal and the federal government sealed the deal when it sold Grand Trunk land in Major's Hill Park for $100,000.

Hays hired Bradford Lee Gilbert, a New York City architect famous for being the first to use steel in building construction, to design the Chateau and station. He had already designed the Twelfth Street Terminal in Chicago, as well as stations in Mexico City, Atlanta and Halifax. Gilbert also planned the reconstruction of Grand Central Terminal in New York.

Ottawa Mayor D'Arcy Scott broke sod on 26 October 1907 to begin construction of the new railway station. Controversy developed shortly afterwards when it was discovered Hays arbitrarily modified plans to cut costs. City council had approved the project on the basis of a $2.5 million expenditure and was reluctant to allow the scaled-down version to proceed without explanation.

Hays returned to Ottawa city council on 15 May, 1908 with his new proposal. "It is substantially in accordance with the plans and models which have been heretofore presented and which I understand were satisfactory," he said of the hotel, adding the station plans "are more approporiate in their design and appearance than those heretofore produced".

CN Public Affairs and Advertising, Montreal

Charles Melville Hays as President, Grand Trunk Railway System, shortly before his death.

The plans were virtually identical in reality, except that the new scheme called for construction of a hotel costing in excess of $1.5 million and a $525,000 railway station. Montreal's Ross and MacFarlane replaced Gilbert as project architects. The hotel contractors were the George A. Fuller Company of New York City while Peter Lyall and Sons were the general contractors for the station.

The Chateau's lobby would be adorned with a marble bust of its namesake. Commissioned to do the sculpture was Paul Romain Chevre, a French artist who lived in Paris and Quebec City. He was already well-known in Canada for his statue of Marianne, located outside Montreal's Union Française, and the landmark Samuel de Champlain statue on Dufferin Terrace, next to the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City. Both statues still stand.

Chevre was also travelling to Canada aboard *Titanic* for the official opening of the Chateau, scheduled for 26 April 1912. The 45 year-old sculptor was always apprehensive about sea voyages, although he was a seasoned traveller having crossed the Atlantic twice a year for 14 years. (He survived the disaster, leaving

National Archives of Canada

The Chateau Laurier hotel under construction.

National Archives of Canada

The hotel in 1912. It was enlarged in 1927 and now belongs to Canadian Pacific Hotels and Resorts.

in the first lifeboat lowered. The bust had gone on ahead on another ship.)

Hays was appointed Grand Trunk president in October, 1909, after Sir Charles Rivers-Wilson retired. He studied the architecture of England's great hotels and the continent's hotel management systems whenever in London for Grand Trunk board meetings. On one such trip in the spring of 1912, Hays travelled to Europe with Clara; daughter Orian, 28, and her husband Thornton Davidson, a 32-year-old stockbroker and former hockey player with the Montreal Victorias who was being groomed for an executive position with Grand Trunk; Miss Anne Perreault, Mrs. Hays' maid; and Vivian Payne, his 23-year-old private male secretary. They were invited to return to North America as the private guests of J. Bruce Ismay, chairman of White Star, on the maiden voyage of the company's new steamer *Titanic*. Hays gladly accepted, as *Titanic* was scheduled to leave Southampton on 10 April and arrive in New York a week later, allowing plenty of time to get to Ottawa for the Chateau's opening. Hays also wanted to return to be near daughter Louise during a difficult pregnancy.

On 1 April he wrote from London on Grand Trunk letterhead to Lockett Gavin Coleman, the railway's assistant superintendent in Montreal, that the visit had been enjoyable. "They always say I bring sunshine," he boasted. Hays added: "Thornton and Orian are in Paris and they expected us to join them there for Easter and then sail from Cherbourg, but we have concluded we would like Knockholt [the estate of an aristrocrat helping to fund Grand Trunk] better and shall stay there and sail via S.S. *Titanic* on our return April 10th."

The Hays party was booked into four first-class cabins on the Promenade Deck. Mr. and Mrs. Hays were in B-69, the Davidsons were next door in B-71 and Miss Perreault and Payne occupied cabins B-73 and B-24, respectively. They were travelling on ticket number 12749 and paid £93/10s, approximately $4,690 Canadian in today's dollars (about 15 percent less in U.S. funds). This fare was significantly lower than the regular price for similar accommodations as the Hays party were the guests of Ismay.

Hays and company enjoyed the sumptuous food and magnificent appointments of the new vessel. It was said he and Ismay hoped to strike a business deal with White Star encouraging new immigrants to travel across Canada on Grand Trunk trains while Grand Trunk would promote White Star as the preferred ocean line across the Atlantic. Whether such a venture was discussed is open to speculation. But it is clear Hays was concerned about the intense steamship rivalry of the day. He said in a conversation with Colonel Archibald Gracie prior to retiring on the night of 14 April, the very night *Titanic* met disaster: "The White Star, the Cunard and the Hamburg-American lines are devoting their attention and ingenuity in vying with one another to attain the supremacy in luxurious ships and in making speed records. The time will come soon when this will be checked by some appalling disaster."

Hays' prophecy proved true. The world's most infamous marine disaster occurred within hours of this observation after *Titanic* struck an iceberg at 11:40 p.m. Thomas Andrews, a managing director and head of the design department of Harland and Wolff, Limited, the Irish shipbuilders who built *Titanic*, was on board to provide assistance during the shakedown crossing. He was summoned to the bridge where he did some quick calculations based on damage reports. The news was not good. *Titanic* was doomed.

Captain Edward J. Smith ordered women and children into the few lifeboats *Titanic* carried. Hays and Davidson escorted Mrs. Hays and Orian to the boats, placed fur coats around them, stepped back and saw them off. "Good-bye, this ship is good for 10 hours," Hays assured his wife.

He was wrong. The ship sank within three hours, at 2:20 a.m. on 15 April, taking Hays, Davidson, Payne and over 1,500 others to their deaths.

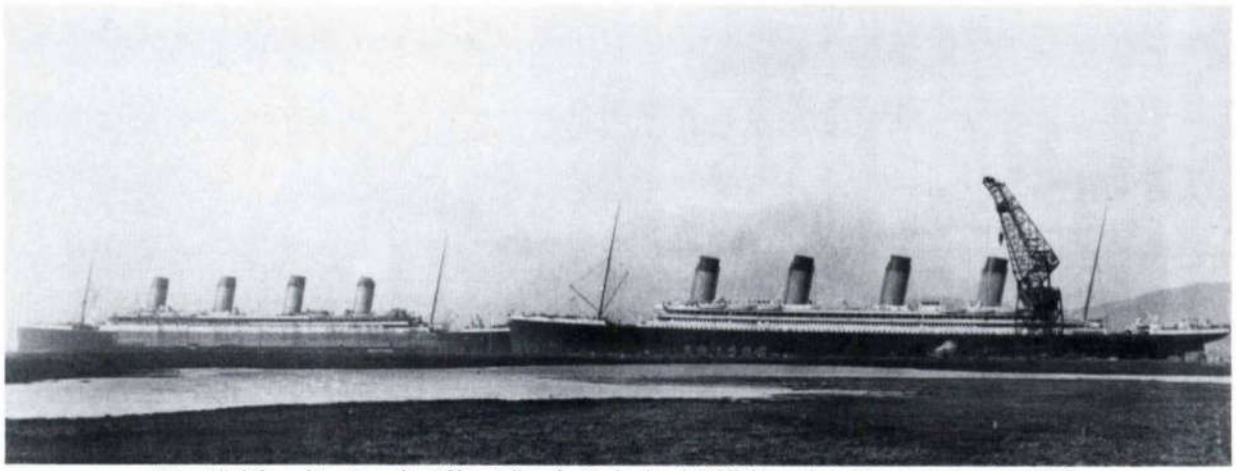
There was initial hope for Hays' survival after a wireless message was received in Montreal claiming he had been rescued. This news was reported in papers across North America on 16 April and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* added Davidson was also saved.

The truth emerged that night when the 10 p.m. edition of the *Montreal Daily Star* said all survivors were aboard the Cunard Line rescue ship R.M.S. Carpathia and Hays was not among them. "ABANDON HOPE FOR C.M. HAYS," announced the headlines.

Mrs. Hays had attempted to send wireless messages to the Grand Trunk offices in Montreal while aboard *Carpathia* to advise of the disaster. In her first message, which was never transmitted, she said: "Hays, Davidson, Molson, Payne, Mr. and Mrs. Allison and daughter missing. Orian, Annie & I on board *Carpathia*" (Harry Markland Molson and the Hudson Johnston Allison family were other prominent members of Montreal society lost in the disaster.) On 18 April she sent the following message: "Mrs. Hays Mrs. Davidson safe no news of husband Hays"

His loss was confirmed in April 19th's *Montreal Herald*. "It was not until noon yesterday that I received word from the *Carpathia* that Mr. Hays was not aboard," Grand Trunk vice-president Howard G. Kelley told the paper. "I had been in New York since Tuesday morning. Everybody on board, of course, wanted to send a message, and their friends ashore were frantic to get word of them. I sat right in the Marconi office to get my message through.

"Immediately we found Mrs. Hays and Mrs. Davidson we took them direct to the New York Central



Courtesy Harland and Wolff Limited.

"Titanic" (left) and its sister ship "Olympic" at the Harland and Wolff shipyards, Belfast, Ireland, in late 1912.

MONTREAL'S LOSS WAS VERY HEAVY

All Hope for President Hays Has Been Given Up

MR. THORNTON DAVIDSON

One of the Most Widely Known and Popular Men in the City—Mr. Q. Baxter a Popular Amateur Sportsman—Securities Lost.

(Special Despatch to The Globe.)

Montreal, April 17.—Friends of the Montrealers who were on board the Titanic have sent hundreds of queries within the past three days, but all remain unanswered. The sea has not given up her dead, and no word from the living has come to tell of that last awful plunge of the boat they reguarded unsinkable.

To-night the friends of Messrs. Hays, Davidson, Molson, Allison, Payne and Baxter gave up hope, and regard them all as lost. Word has come through stating that the list of names furnished earlier in the day was authentic, and that there is little or no hope of any being added to the list.

Desperate efforts have been made by Mr. Hays' family and by Grand Trunk officials to get in touch with the Carpathia, but the lastest report is that he was drowned. Nearly all the members of his family have gone to New York, as well as several leading G. T. R. officials. Despatches received to-night from them state that no hope is held out for his safety. In fact, so sure are the people of his death that a memorial service has been arranged for Sunday morning by Rev. Dr. Johnston of the American Presbyterian Church. Mr. Hays was a member of the Board of Managers of this church, and took a keen interest in its activities as well as in Y. M. C. A. work.

The death of both Mr. Hays and his son-in-law, Mr. Thornton Davidson, makes the blow particularly severe to the family. In addition Mr. Hays' private Secretary is among those lost.

Item from the "Toronto Globe", 18 April 1912.

station. There a special train was waiting. It included Mr. Hays' private car, which I had first sent to Halifax and then ordered on, and my own car. The ladies bore the trip exceedingly well under the circumstances. We could not, of course press them to a great extent for the particulars. Our first care was to make them as comfortable as possible."

All celebrations for the opening of the Chateau Laurier and new railway station were cancelled following the tragedy. Marjorie Garden, a secretary at the hotel, remembered many years later: "In April of 1912 we were all awaiting the arrival of Mr. Charles Hays from England. He was coming to Ottawa to preside over the opening ceremonies at the Chateau Laurier and the Central Union Passenger Station. Suddenly we received the ghastly news of the sinking of the *Titanic*, made even more horrible for us because of the loss of Mr. Hays. We were all terribly shocked. All thoughts of celebrations went out of our heads and Mr. Bergman [the hotel manager] postponed the openings until June."

No official opening ever took place at either the hotel or railway station. The hotel doors were simply opened for business on 1 June 1912, with Sir Wilfrid's signing of the register as the first guest.

The bust was shown to the former prime minister the day before the opening, and much to everyone's astonishment, Sir Wilfrid was offended by the nose. Hotel management admitted it had been damaged in transit so a local sculptor was quickly found to redesign the offensive organ. Sir Wilfrid remained upset and reportedly left the hotel in a huff, only returning the following day to sign the register.

The *Montreal Herald* for 19 April spoke for many: "'A national loss' is the consensus of expression concerning the death of Mr. Charles Melville Hays whose career, so full of usefulness to the country, has been tragically cut short by the sinking in mid-ocean of the mammoth *Titanic*." The paper added: "Exactly how much good he wrought for the land of his adoption will very likely not be fully realized until his deeds are viewed in the perspective which only distance of time can give to a contemplation of the gigantic schemes which he fathered and carried to brilliantly successful conclusions. The achievements of Mr. Hays have been so colossal that the man himself has at times been in danger of being overlooked in a survey of the great things which he accomplished; but to those fortunate enough to know him, to those who worked under his orders, he was a man of the greatest kindliness of heart and most generous spirit."

The entire Grand Trunk system halted for five minutes at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, 25 April as a silent tribute to the late president during a memorial service at the American Presbyterian Church in Montreal. There was a simultaneous service at St. Edmund King

Courtesy of Allan Hustak, Montreal

Clara Hays was among the "Titanic" survivors. She died in 1955 at the age of 96.

and Martyr Church in Lombard Street, London, attended by Grand Trunk's British directors and shareholders. Identical memorial plaques were installed in both churches.

The next day Hays' body was recovered by the Nova Scotia cable ship *Minia*, a vessel chartered by White Star to search for victims. Francis Dyke, temporarily serving as *Minia*'s wireless operator, said in a letter to his mother: "We began the search yesterday + the first we picked up was C.M. Hayes [*sic*] of G. Trunk Rail. It was no trouble to identify him as he had a lot of papers on him + a watch with his name on."

Hays' body was taken to Halifax on 6 May and immediately delivered to J.H. Snow & Co., Ltd., local undertakers. It was then taken by Grand Trunk vice-president Kelley to North Street railway station and placed aboard the private rail car *Canada* for shipment to Montreal.

Hays was interred at Montreal's Mount Royal Cemetery. His tombstone reads: "Because this man lived, and worked, and loved, and died, we are a better people." Mrs. Hays died in 1955 at the age of 96. She is buried with her husband.

No damages were claimed by the Hays estate against White Star. The remaining family members refused to file suit, unlike all the others in first class. The Hays were the guests of Ismay and, as Mrs. Hays was reported to have said: "When one is a guest, one does not sue one's host."

Photo by Gavin Murphy

The Laurier bust at the Chateau Laurier, Ottawa. Sir Wilfrid hated the nose.

Can it honestly be said that Hays was as astute as the press described him following the *Titanic* disaster? Was he, to use the words of Sir Wilfrid, "a valuable acquisition to Canada?". Was Hays "a man of quiet dignity, whose sanity and strength are seen and felt in all his undertakings", as the *Montreal Standard* claimed?

There is every reason to believe he was a loving husband and father of four daughters. He was also fond of Payne, some claiming Vivian was the son Hays never had.

The Payne and Hays families lived around the corner from each other in Montreal. (The Paynes lived on Victoria St. while Hays' address was 27 Ontario Avenue in 1912). Payne's father had been Grand Trunk comptroller.

After his father's death in 1902 when Vivian was only 13, Hays hired the youngster at Grand Trunk. As well as being Hays' private secretary, Payne was given the lofty (and meaningless) title of project co-ordinator for construction of the Chateau and railway station. A memorial brass plaque honouring Payne was placed in Montreal's Christ Church Anglican Cathedral.

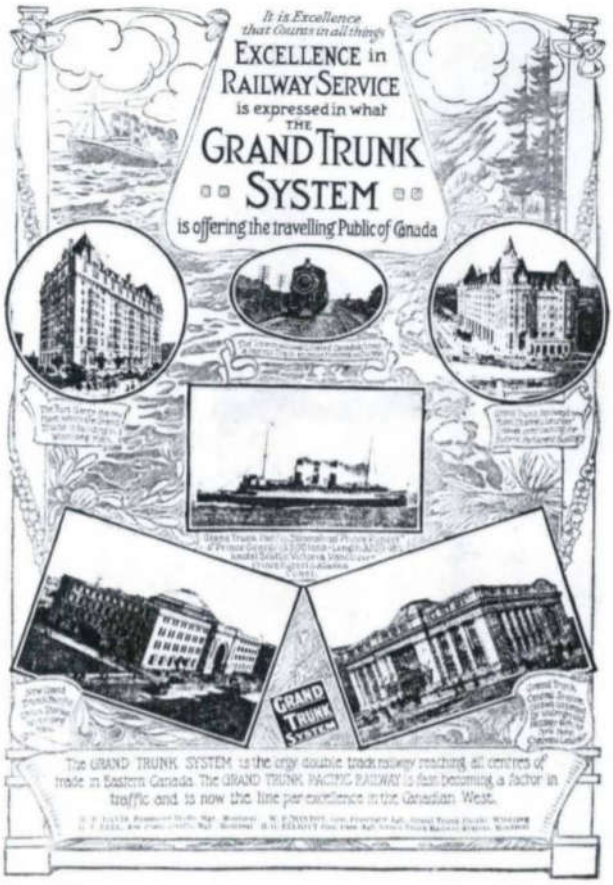
A different story emerges when it came to his staff. During a bitter strike in 1910 when Grand Trunk employees demanded wage parity with American railway workers, Hays summarily fired the ringleaders. He later reneged on his promise to reinstate them following settlement of the strike.

One month short of his 56th birthday when he died, Hays was at the pinnacle of his career. He was a pillar of Montreal society, serving as a governor of the Montreal General Hospital, the Royal Victoria Hospital and helping to establish the Mount Royal Club. A governor of McGill University and delegate to the 1903 Imperial Trades Congress, he was also president of the numerous Grand Trunk subsidiaries in both Canada and the United States. Hays was a director of several major North American corporations and a vice-president of the St. John Ambulance Association. A Grand Trunk Pacific divisional point in Saskatchewan was named Melville after him, British Columbia's Mount Hays was named in his honour and a statue was put up at Prince Rupert.

Yet he was obsessed with completion of the transcontinental railway after failing to buy out Canadian Northern. Attempts by Sir Wilfrid and others to convince Grand Trunk and Canadian Northern that only one other transcontinental line was necessary fell on deaf ears. As costs escalated Hays was obliged to travel to London, cap in hand, requesting additional funding from his directors. This determination to complete the line at virtually any cost ultimately led to Grand Trunk's financial ruin and nationalization by the federal government after the First World War. (Grand Trunk, Grand Trunk Pacific, Canadian Northern and National Transcontinental formed the nucleus of the Canadian National Railways crown corporation.) Hays ran the railway out of his back pocket and only he knew the grand plan. Other company officials were often kept in the dark. He approved the National Transcontinental proposal without proper authority. One of Sir Wilfrid's cabinet ministers called Hays heartless, cruel and tyrannical.

Hindsight of 80 years helps put Hays' life and achievements in perspective. Hays was, to use a 1990s euphemism, "a mover and shaker". He made things happen. Hays was hired by Grand Trunk to get the company out of debt. At this he was initially a spectacular success. Then ambition took over.

Hays saw Canadian Pacific prosper with its transcontinental railway and hotel system. He had the support of the government of the day (just as CP had the earlier support of the former Conservative government of Sir John A. Macdonald) and he wanted Grand Trunk to achieve similar success. It was the turn of the century and Canada was a young and growing nation. Anything was possible. After all, Sir Wilfrid said the era was "Canada's century".


It is Excellence that Counts in all things
EXCELLENCE in RAILWAY SERVICE
is expressed in what
THE GRAND TRUNK SYSTEM
is offering the travelling Public of Canada
GRAND TRUNK SYSTEM
The GRAND TRUNK SYSTEM is the only double track railway reaching all centres of trade in Eastern Canada. The GRAND TRUNK PACIFIC RAILWAY is fast becoming a factor in traffic and is now the line par excellence in the Canadian West.

A 1912 magazine ad features Grand Trunk hotels and stations in Ottawa and Winnipeg.

History would have called Hays a great man had he succeeded. But an iceberg intervened that fateful Sunday night in 1912, destroying *Titanic*, the man and his dream. ♦

Gavin Murphy is an Ottawa lawyer and a "Titanic" enthusiast of long-standing.

★

GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY

The Grand Trunk, largely owned by British investors, was authorized in 1852 to build a line between Montreal and Toronto. A year later a line linking Montreal with Portland, Maine, was added, making Grand Trunk a major force in pre-Confederation transporation. By the end of the century the railway had a line running to Chicago. In 1901 the Laurier government involved Grand Trunk in an ambitious plan to link the Maritimes to the West Coast with a new transcontinental line, with the government building the Atlantic to Winnipeg section and the "Grand Trunk Pacific" connecting Winnipeg to the West Coast. Stiff competition from the CPR and chronic financial problems resulted in Grand Trunk being nationalized in 1919. In 1923 it became a main component in the Canadian National Railways system.

FEASTS OF THE NORTH WEST COMPANY

A Fine Table

By Bryan Eddington

A gentleman of the North West Company sat regally while voyageurs paddled his birch-bark canoe with powerful strokes to the long wharf of the company's inland headquarters at Fort William.

Regal as this gentleman might appear he would be dirty — a common state in the early 1800s — and his clothes would be showing wear; his feet would have been wet for days. He had been travelling for weeks; perhaps after living in a rough trading post all winter. He would certainly be hungry. In fact he might have been approaching starvation:

> On the 13th we camped near Dog Portage [Portage des Chiens], where, from not having followed the advice of Mr. Dease who had counselled us to take along a bag of pemican, we found ourselves absolutely without food.
>
> Starving men are early risers. We set out on the 14th before day and effected a portage, which is long and difficult. At the foot of the rapid we found a sort of restaurant or cabaret, kept by a man named Boucher. We treated the men to a little *eau de vie* and breakfasted on some detestable sausages, poisoned with salt.

Despite his empty belly, Gabriel Franchere, returning with voyageurs from Fort Astoria on the West Coast, had to struggle down the Mountain Portage (now Kakabeka Falls). Indeed, they had to manhandle canoes and equipment through "no fewer than thirty-six portages in the course of the day".

But the journey was nearly over. "At last, at about nine o-clock in the evening we arrived at Fort William."

Franchere had endured long months crossing mountains and thousands of miles of rough prairie. During the trip he and his men would have been relying on food from natives and fur-trade posts such as the one John Dease ruled at Rainy River. Often there was no food to be had.

According to contemporary accounts the voyageurs accepted this hardship and Franchere notes they "kept up their spirits by singing voyageur songs". But the clerks and partners usually had a taste for better things.

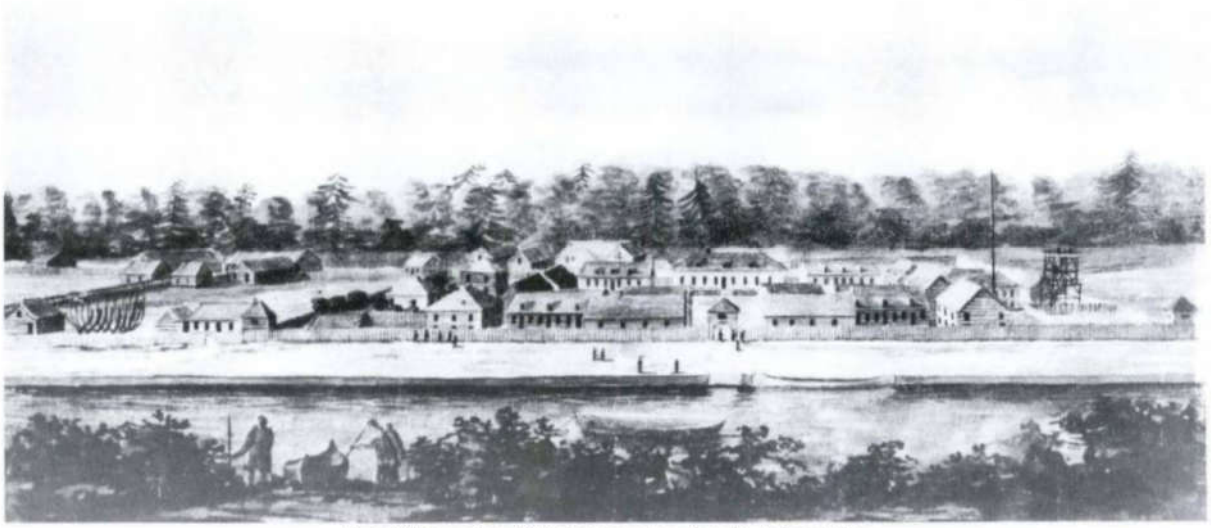
For them Fort William must have seemed an oasis of luxury in the midst of rugged wilderness. And in the middle of this "pretty village" would be the Great Hall that astounded every traveller. ". . . . a salon or hall sixty feet in length by thirty in width decorated with several pieces of painting and some portraits of leading partners. It is in this hall that agents, partners, clerks, interpreters, and guides take their meals together but at different tables," wrote Franchere.

Certainly, although the bourgeois might share their hall with guides and interpreters, they would reserve for themselves the splendor of the head table that dominated one end of the large room.

Washington Irving is hardly an authority, but even he had learned that "the partners from Montreal were the lords in the ascendant; coming from the midst of luxurious and ostentatious life . . .". Indeed the partners considered the whole dignity of the company was represented in their persons and they insisted on conducting themselves in appropriate style.

The gentlemen from Montreal brought with them cooks and bakers, together with delicacies of every kind, and an abundance of choice wines for the banquets.

A list of engages shows various levels of servants hired for the Great Hall. In 1810 John Clifton was paid 20 livres to act as Maitre d'Hotel for the summer;



HBC Collection

Fort William, circa 1812, from a water-colour by Robert Irvine.

Hugh McKay was hired as a butler for three summers at 25 livres a summer. In addition there were domestic servants and travelling servants.

Obviously partners who brought with them a Montreal chef could never be content to eat his "delicacies" from rough wooden platters or drink fine wine from tin mugs.

That remarkable head table in the Great Hall had to have, if not delicate porcelain, at least dishes that would have been acceptable to the wealthy middle class anywhere in Europe or North America. And in the early 1800s that meant creamware and drinking glasses from Britain.

Creamware, like most earthenware, has a resonance like wood when struck; porcelain rings like a bell. Fired at lower temperatures to produce a less-vitrified body, creamware is much more durable than the fragile porcelain that had previously been appreciated by the stylish aristocrats.

Certainly the most popular creamware at this time was from the potteries of Josiah Wedgwood, although he promptly renamed it queensware when it was bought by the queen of England. Inventories attest to the abundance of this tableware at Fort William: "Nine wine decanters; nine wine glasses; 16 blue tea cups; 64 queensware plates; nine dishes".

An inventory for the Naval Store shows that fine tableware was demanded by the gentlemen even on company schooners crossing Lake Superior: "36 flat earthenware plates; oval dishes; 32 queensware dishes; 25 earthenware dishes new."

When Lord Selkirk occupied Fort William in 1816-17, the scrupulously-kept Day Book lists 47 ceramic objects issued between October and May. Some of these were described as queensware and others simply as earthenware. They included "31 earthenware bowls; 4 earthenware plates; 4 earthenware dishes; 4 large tea cups, queensware and 4 pint Basons, queensware."

It must be noted that these issues were made during the winter months when Fort William could be quiet as a winter grave.

The queensware produced by Wedgwood, and used so frequently at Fort William, was by 1815 popular around the world. It was valued even in China where for centuries only the most delicate porcelain was appreciated. The secret was that for the first time tableware was being produced that was not only beautiful but consistent in quality and shape. It was also reasonable in price and resistant to chipping.

Today the home of Wedgwood is still Stoke-on-Trent in the heart of the pottery-making English county of Staffordshire. In this district, since before Roman times, pottery had been a crude cottage industry. Gradually it became organized with ambitious boys leaving their families to apprentice themselves to master potters who taught the whole craft from initial mixing through to baking.

Josiah Wedgwood was such an apprentice but at the age of 12 he caught smallpox. While ill the boy became an avid reader, particularly of science. He was left with a damaged knee that made it impossible to operate a potter's wheel. Profiting from his illness he remained in the potteries and used his growing scientific knowledge to experiment with clays and glazes.

In 1759, when he had his own property, he did away with masters and apprentices, turning to mass production with every man a master only of his own small field. Six years later he was sufficiently content with his creamware to deliver a service to Queen Charlotte,

Dishes and glass at Old Fort William. Queensware is displayed on the top two shelves.

wife of George III. Equally as good at marketing as he was in practical science, Wedgwood, upon the queen's acceptance of his creamware, not only changed its name to queensware but included in his letterhead: "Potter to Her Majesty."

With this approval there was an immediate acceptance by the aristocracy and they were followed by the growing middle class that was reaping immense profits from the Industrial Revolution. In just two years queensware became so popular in Europe and around the world that Wedgwood could not satisfy the demand.

He set up a training scheme whereby gifted boys as young as 12 were taught to model or paint. He also began using molds to mass produce inexpensive and identical tableware. Workers were put on piece rates, and these rates reduced until they had to produce more just to survive. Yet even with the demanding market and mass production, Wedgewood was still the perfectionist who smashed whatever he considered unfit.

In one letter he wrote: "The new round cream bowls . . . are a full inch too large, the handles thrown too far from the body of the vessel, and the holes for the handles too large . . .". The result was that the name Wedgwood became synonymous with tableware that was perfect in its elegance, practicality and durability.

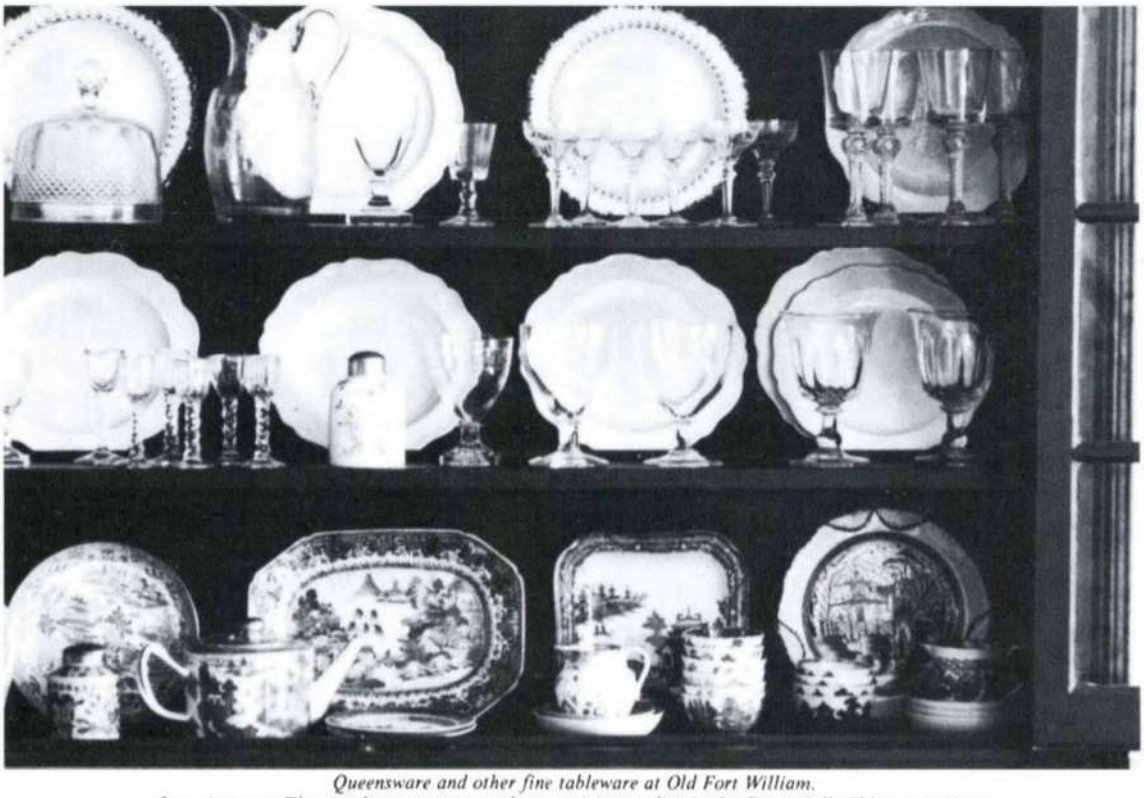
Unfortunately, despite Wedgwood's abhorrence of the slave trade and support for rebellious American colonists, conditions in his factories were typically appalling. Flint grinders developed silicosis, glaziers were stricken by lead poisoning, those who worked the damp, cold clay developed rheumatism and lung disease. Wages allowed bare survival and child labour was endemic.

As for the pottery towns themselves, they became notorious as "the black country". Smoke and soot lay over buildings, vegetation and people. The area became a byword for all that was mean and ugly in the Industrial Revolution.

Nevertheless the elegant queensware that was produced in the depths of that smoke did grace the finest tables in England, villas in the tropics, and that cherrywood head table in the Great Hall at Fort William.

Naturally the gentlemen at Fort William who ate their venison and sturgeon off queensware, would insist on drinking their madeira and brandy from equally fine glasses.

Since there seems to have been no glass factories in the Canadas at this time, and little glassware produced in the United States, we can assume the gentlemen's drinking glasses and decanters came from either England or Ireland. In fact, in Canada, the first glass factory is recorded about 1825 at Mallorytown, and



Queensware and other fine tableware at Old Fort William.
Opposite page: The past lives again as modern participants dine in the Great Hall, Old Fort William.

this facility probably confined itself to bottles and window-glass. It was not until the late 1800s that the production of glass became organized in Canada.

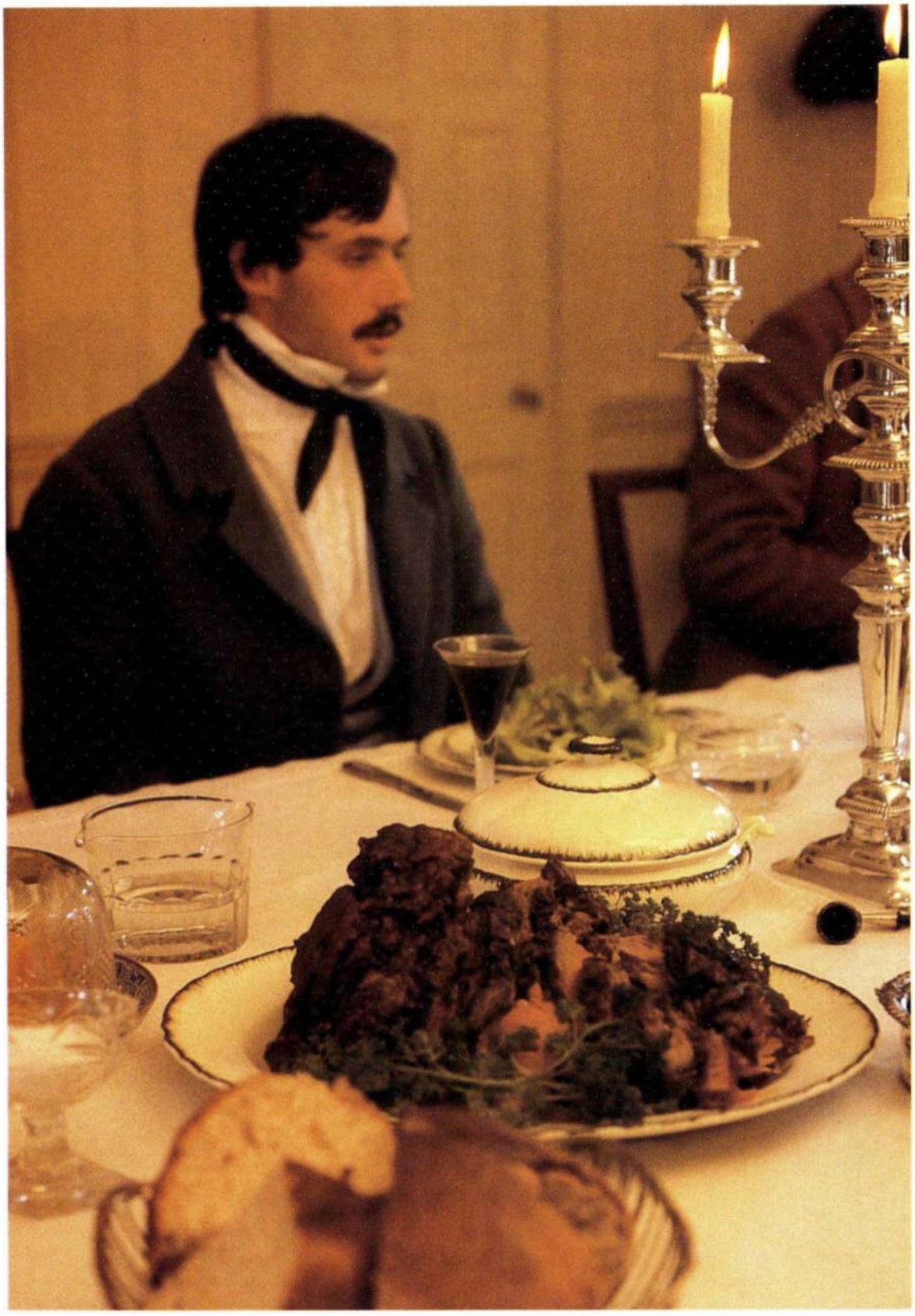
Glassware from England and Ireland poured into North America during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although the flow of English glass was curbed by the doubling of duty on it in 1777, much of the English glassmaking industry simply moved quickly to Ireland and continued to export.

Beakers and goblets are mentioned in Canada from the earliest times and by the last quarter of the eighteenth century delicate flutes and wine glasses were being advertised. Georgian glassware from England and Ireland was popular and a native style of glass cutting was developed with characteristic hollow diamonds. In addition to cutting, engraving was common, with a number of standard motifs such as grapes on a wine glass or hops and barley on an ale glass. With their connection with Scotland it is possible that sentimental North Westers might have had glasses engraved with a Jacobite symbol, although that had gone out of fashion by this time. Usually this emblem was an open rose with one or two buds.

Glassware with opaque, twisted stems was popular, occasionally with colour twists. Coloured glassware, usually blue and opaque white, was also common in the early 1800s with decanters sometimes holding as much as a quart and engraved with the name of its contents such as ale or madeira.

Price lists for glass houses in the late 1700s show a wide variety in wine glass styles, sometimes more than 75. By then it had become fashionable for each drinker to have his, or her, own wine-glass. And by now the idea of having different shaped glassware for different drinks, such as wine and brandy, had developed. We would expect no less on the grand head table at Fort William. Plain, tapering decanters vied with molded versions from Ireland.

To most of us today it seems almost impossible that tapering decanters, fragile glasses and breakable tableware could have travelled safely all the way from Britain to the wilderness village of Fort William. It has been said that so many ships carrying tableware were lost in the Atlantic that the whole route must now be littered with broken dishes and glasses. And even in the St. Lawrence the vessels were not safe; the lower river was beset by dangerous reefs and currents. At Montreal, however, dealers and shippers could sigh with relief. St. Paul Street, near the waterfront, was the centre of the crockery trade and a cousin of Wedgwood, Josiah II, even managed a Wedgwood china store there for a brief time. The heaviest demand was for the latest styles and patterns as the class-conscious sought to keep abreast of their equals in England.



Candlelight casts a romantic glow as the Great Hall awaits guests to arrive at a twentieth-century banquet (top). Later, a dinner guest gets into the spirit of the occasion (right).

A gala dinner in the Great Hall, Old Fort William.

Excitement was heightened by visits from members of the leading pottery families, even as it is today.

Buyers wanted elegance. And the staple of the Canadian trade at this time was undoubtedly Wedgwood's queensware, perhaps the only tableware to be advertised by name. It was refined, perfectly-potted, evenly-glazed anad fashionably decorated. And if a teapot was bought, the new owner could be sure that it not only looked good but poured well, and the lid fitted. Even Lieutenant Governor Robert Milnes and the wealthy Attorney-General, James Monk, used queensware for their formal dinners.

But once they had been bought by the North Westers, the dishes and glasses still had the most hazardous part of the journey to overcome. Heavy farm wagons would haul them, bouncing over ruts and potholes, past the worst of the rapids to Lachine.

Here they would be transferred either to the company's large canoes, or to bateaux with a crew of five. Boatmen who handled the bateaux worked often up to their armpits in icy water as they rowed, sailed, pulled and poled their craft to Kingston. With a solid reputation for drinking and wild oaths, it seems unlikely these men had much respect for fine glassware and dishes.

The glasses and tableware that survived continued their long journey by canoe along portages and through rushing rapids — perhaps even a transfer to a schooner for the trip across Lake Superior — until eventually they arrived at Fort William and its head table in the Great Hall.

Here, besides the usual tableware and carvers, there would have been ladles, serving spoons, cruets and ewers. Side tables would have been in use with small side dishes, replacement dishes, decanters, and finger bowls. Servants waited at the side of the room, rather than at the head table.

The table would have been laid with first-course dishes before the diners sat down. Soup and fish dishes would be in place, with individual place settings for each person. Roasts, sometimes sliced and rebuilt, were displayed on special stands as *pieces de resistance*.

As Ross Cox described Fort William in 1817:

> . . . its fashionable season generally continues from the latter end of May to the latter end of August. During this period, good doing and festivity predominate; and the luxuries of the dinner table compensate in some degree for the long fasts and short-comings experienced by those who are stationed in remote posts.

Yet it does seem that there were times when, even in the Great Hall, the menu would be slim by Montreal standards.

Daniel McKenzie described the food he found there about 1815 — perhaps in winter: "There are no pidgeons to be got at this place, so that we are obliged to live upon sturgeon and sallad — and bread and cheese."

But of course there was always an abundance of liquor to sustain the weary diner. McKenzie again: "But to recompense we have plenty of excellent madeira and brandy".

Even when food was varied and plentiful, one might expect the all-male diners to enjoy relatively plain cooking, perhaps modelled on what was popular in England and Scotland, with some local dishes and an influence from Lower Canada.

Certainly the description of a meal at Grand Portage in 1801 leads to the belief that while food may have been abundant, its preparation was plain; the roasts and stews that men might prefer today. Dainty fare was likely to be reserved for the ladies left behind in Montreal.

At Grand Portage it was noted: ". . . . the provision consisting of bread, salt pork, beef, hams, fish, and venison, butter, peas, Indian corn, potatoes, tea, spirits, wine, &c. and plenty of milk".

Nevertheless even this unsophisiticated fare must have seemed like luxury to travellers who had been living for weeks on rotten fish, or corn and grease, when they could get it.

In Britain at this time the standard formal dinner consisted of appetizers (soups, fish and light entrees), main dishes (large cuts of meat plus poultry and game), and "afters" (cold meats, savouries, desserts, fruits and vegetables).

Inventories give a good idea of the foods actually served at Fort William. The farm supplied fresh beef, veal, mutton and butter, while Double Gloucester cheese, American cheese, ham, raisins, brown sugar and loaf sugar where shipped in. Local delicacies such as fish, venison, duck and partridge, plus bear and beaver, were obviously popular. Beverages included green China tea, wines, liquors and ale.

According to family papers found by chef Jehane Benoit, a typical dinner for North West Company partners at the Beaver Club in Montreal consisted of braised venison, venison sausages, wild rice and quail, partridge, pickled turnips, applesauce, and bag pudding. To drink there was Scotch whisky, Madeira, Athol Brose, gin, high wine, and mahogany liquor. High wine is usually over-proof spirits mixed with juice or wine; mahogany liquor is gin or whisky mixed with molasses, Athol Brose is oatmeal, honey and whisky.

Other authorities such as Marjorie Wilkins Campbell mention bear, beaver-tail soup, roast beaver and pemmican.

One suspects that if this was the fare in Montreal, it was likely to be repeated at Fort William, particularly as most of the supplies were available and they had brought a Montreal chef to add zest to them.

Alcohol was of course always plentiful and drunk with enthusiasm. One inventory of goods being transported to the inland headquarters from Montreal in 1794 lists 400 kegs of high wine, 50 kegs of rum, 10 kegs of brandy, and 20 kegs of shrub, a fruit cordial with spirits. Much of this liquor such as high wine would, however, not be for the Great Hall, but for trading with the natives.

In his book *Forts of Canada*, Leslie Hannon speaks poetically of gentlemen dining off "buffalo tongue and hump, smoked and salted, 30-pound lake trout and whitefish netted at the gate of the fort, venison, wild duck and geese, beaver tails and confectioners' delicacies".

Certainly Dr. John McLoughlin, who was an important supervisor at Fort William before becoming governor of Fort Vancouver, believed in setting a fine table. At Vancouver, Edward Belcher in his *Oregon Territory*, talks of roast beef and pork, boiled mutton, baked salmon, boiled ham, beets, carrots, turnips, cabbage, potatoes and wheaten bread.

Food indeed fit for the "Lords of the Wilderness".

But surely it was not so much the food itself as the elegance of the setting that astounded travellers who had become used to scooping corn and grease from a communal pot with their grimy hands, or trying to pick the hair from pemmican gritty with soil.

Suddenly they paddled, worn and dirty, from the dark pine forest into a neat village of genteel elegance. A world where the polished head table supported fine English creamware and slender-stemmed wine glasses, as well as decanters, napkins, finger-bowls, and platters for sweetmeats and fruit. Nearby hovered trained servants to be summoned by the simple drumming of a knife on the table.

To visitors who had travelled from as far as the West Coast it must have seemed they had paddled into paradise. ♦

Bryan Eddington, who lives at Vickers Heights, Ontario, has a long-standing interest in fur trade history. His article on "The Great Hall at Old Fort William" appeared in the Summer 1981 issue of "The Beaver".

The Troublemaker

By Allan Levine

SECRET CRAFT
The Journalism of Edward Farrer
By Carman Cumming. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1992. 334 pp., illus. $45.00.

There may not have been as torrid a time in the Canadian newspaper business as in Toronto during the late 1880s. Six daily newspapers of varying political stripe and temperament — the *Globe*, the *Mail*, the *Empire*, the *World*, the *News* and the *Telegram* — all desperately vied for the attention and dollars of the city's small population. In the middle of this rivalry and confusion was Edward "Ned" Farrer, by all accounts the most famous journalist of his day.

Farrer was an expert in economics (among numerous other subjects) and a brilliant writer who could pen elegant, clever and sarcastic prose. Editorializing, for example, on Canada's treatment of its native population, he wrote in 1886 (clearly ahead of his time) that "the crimes perpetrated upon the savages of this continent, and perpetrated too, in the name of Christianity and light, cry to heaven. We shot the Indian in Newfoundland like a seal, for the sake of the fur he wore. . ." Farrer had a good sense of humour as well and loved sports as much as politics; he could tell equally delightful stories about both. Yet he was also a mischievous troublemaker; a man with many dark secrets who participated in a variety of plots and intrigues.

All of this makes him an ideal subject for an entertaining as well as informative biography. And in *Secret Craft*, Ottawa historian and writer Carman Cumming admirably profiles Farrer's fascinating life. He also presents an excellent picture and analysis of late nineteenth-century Canadian journalism, a period when the press began its slow transformation from party control to an independent status.

During this era when politicians owned newspapers, most editors usually obeyed their partisan masters. But Farrer was unique. He was regarded as a "mercenary", a journalist who would work for anyone who paid him. If the need arose, so

Edward Farrer

the story goes, Farrer was capable of writing passionate, eloquent and partisan editorials about the two sides of a complex issue at the same time.

Still, Cumming shows that, in fact, Farrer, did have his own agenda although he did move around a lot. According to the "official" record, facts that Cumming could not verify, Farrer was born in Ireland to a Catholic family in 1850. He was supposedly educated by Jesuits in England and Rome, before giving up thoughts of becoming a priest and opting for journalism instead. In any event, from the time he arrived in North America in 1869 he started attracting attention in New York as well as Toronto where he established his reputation as a newspaperman of some importance.

It was, however, as the editor of the Tory organ the *Toronto Mail* from 1885 to 1890 that Farrer guaranteed his place in the history of Canadian journalism. For several years, much to Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's consternation, the *Mail* had been pursuing a vicious anti-Catholic, anti-French editorial policy. When Farrer arrived on the scene, he leaped into the fray with his "masterpieces of invective", further damaging the Conservative party's support among Ontario Catholics. The paper with Farrer at the helm officially split from the Tories in 1887, forcing Macdonald to establish yet another Toronto organ, the *Empire*.

In assessing Farrer's role in all of this, it has long been assumed by most historians that he willingly complied with orders from the *Mail*'s rabid anti-French Catholic management. It was said that he also resented the moral dictates of the Church hierarchy. Yet Cumming argues, somewhat convincingly, that Farrer was not as much of a bigot as was previously believed, and that his real objective went further than attacking Catholic teachings and prelates. The "race and creed" passion was merely a smoke screen for his true message: "that Confederation was coming apart, and the only salvation for English Canada lay to the south."

Along with Goldwin Smith and others, Farrer was deeply involved in the annexation movement of the

early 1890s. He was a frequent visitor to Washington, moving in high circles and supplying information to American politicians keen on claiming for their own the northern half of the continent.

It was Farrer's interest in annexation that led him to write his infamous pamphlet on this then controversial and emotional issue. When the "proofs" fell into John A. Macdonald's hands during the 1891 federal election, all "hell" broke out and Farrer, who by this time had jumped from the *Mail* to the *Globe*, found himself in the midst of one of Canadian political history's greatest plots. In some quarters, the celebrated journalist was denounced as a traitor, while Macdonald and the Conservatives exploited the loyalty factor and captured the election.

Farrer left the *Globe* about a year later (he may have been pushed out). He spent the remainder of his life freelancing for a variety of publications, including the *Economist*, churning out elegant articles on everything from imperialism to freight rates. He also worked as a secret investigator for Liberal Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier on special assignments.

Because so many stories and rumours swirled around Farrer — who was himself secretive and close-mouthed about his activities — Cumming often has a difficult time sorting it all out. In the end, he is forced to conclude that we may never know the full truth about this "master craftsman". This, however, does not detract from the fact that Farrer was indeed "an original and unconventional journalist". Moreover, even when he acted in a partisan manner, he showed "that party journalists were by no means solely party instruments — that they were instead often active members of the party team — influencing as well as being influenced." ♦

Allan Levine is the author of "Scrum Wars: The Prime Ministers and the Media" published this fall by Dundurn Press.

History's Hidden Pages

By Anne Morton

WHILE THE WOMEN ONLY WEPT
Loyalist Refugee Women in Eastern Ontario

By Janice Potter-MacKinnon. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 1993. 199 pp., illus. $34.95.

This work is one of a number of studies of the Loyalists which have appeared in the last two decades, both in Canada and the United States, and which re-examine the role of the Loyalists in the American War of Independence and in the British colonies which now form part of Canada. One of these studies, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* was published by Harvard in 1983 and written by Janice Potter. I take her to be the author of the book under review, but the dust-jacket information provided by McGill-Queen's is oddly silent on this point, if so. *While the Women Only Wept* is a book that appeals equally to the emotions and to the intellect. It arose from the author's indignation at the portrayal of Loyalist women in works such as the 1894 *Canadian Idylls* by the Loyalist bard, William Kirby, from which the title is borrowed. As Potter-MacKinnon says in her preface:

> The stories of these women are fascinating and largely untold . . . filled with drama, intrigue and tragedy. For over 200 years historians have overlooked these women and their experiences. My hope is that I can do justice to them. It is long overdue.

The author indeed convinces us that the absence of these women from our historical consciousness is a source of justifiable anger. The Loyalist women who came to eastern Ontario (and who will be referred to in the remainder of this review simply as Loyalist women) lived in frontier territory. During the American War of Independence they worked to provide shelter and information to Loyalist soldiers and to maintain the Loyalist alliance with the Mohawks; all this with their husbands away, fighting, imprisoned or dead, and their homes and farms at the mercy of the Patriots. It could be not so much a case of keeping the home fires burning but of having your home burnt down.

Two women stand out above all others as loyalist heroines — Molly Brant and Sarah McGinnis. Molly, the sister of Joseph Brant and the wife of Sir William Johnson, is not unknown as a leading Mohawk ally of the British but Sarah's story came as a revelation to me, as I suspect it will to most readers. "When the war broke out", we are told, "the Patriots offered [Sarah] twelve shillings York currency per day and a guard of fifteen men if she would try to influence the Mohawk on their behalf." Instead, Sarah and her family, at a considerable cost in suffering (she was fated to lose a granddaughter and a son), remained staunch Loyalists. After they had escaped to Canada, Sarah "was asked by the British to return to Indian country to steady the Indians

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in their attachment to the British cause. Sarah agreed to winter with the Indians even though she was sixty-four years old at the time."

When Loyalist women were compelled, sometimes by Patriot mobs, to flee to Canada, their journeys were hellish. Inadequately fed and clothed because, assuming that they had been left with very much in the way of supplies, there was still the problem of carrying as much as they needed, they trudged along muddy summer trails or crossed the insecure winter ice of Lake Champlain, all the while fearful of hostile Indians and consumed by anxiety for the children they shepherded. When the British rescued a group who had escaped to the Mohawk River "there were five women, thirty-one children, and only one pair of shoes among them."

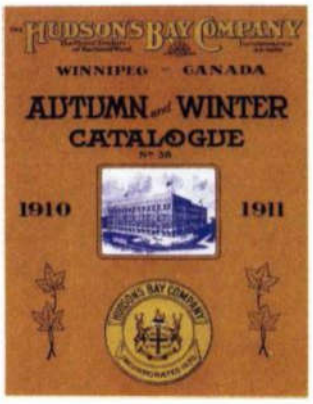
As Potter-MacKinnon is kindling us to her own anger at the question, "Why don't we know about these women?", she is at the same time answering it. The intellectual starting point for the book is Voltaire's statement that history is a bag of tricks we play on the dead. It is now commonplace to admit that these tricks are more often played on women whose role is often neglected or distorted in the historical record. In the case of Loyalist women it is not only possible to find out what they did but to see the process through which what they did and endured was removed from history. This was a process that happened in time and so, as the author presents the story of the Loyalist women she weaves into the narrative a sensitive and sympathetic analysis of how their story came to disappear.

Her analysis begins with an explanation of why people became Loyalists. Most had not spent hours pacing the floor with furrowed brows while they debated the merits of monarchy versus republicanism. Many Loyalists were recent immigrants and members of cultural minorities, with a strong sense of who their own folk were and every intention of holding fast to their group identity. Communal loyalties, whether they were Highland Scots, Huguenots, Protestants from the German Palatinate, or tenants of Sir William Johnson, were important to them. Loyalist women, quite apart from the fact that they naturally tended to belong to the same group as their husbands, were Loyalists because their husbands were; wifely duty and affection motivated them to support the cause for which their husbands fought.

Once they had arrived in Canada, Loyalist men were forced to articulate how they had come to be exiles. The had to explain themselves not only to the British authorities, who needed to be convinced that they had a moral obligation to help the Loyalists, but also to themselves. A man who has lost everything and been forced into exile is not likely to feel like a hero, more like all kinds of a fool. In order to "begin the world again", as one of them put it, he needs to create a sense of psychological security. This the Loyalist men did by depicting themselves as men of firmly-held political convictions who had sacrificed their all (and the size of the all appears to have increased with the telling) for a cause that, whatever the mischances of war, was the right one. In this way, they created a version of their past they could live with and persuaded the British authorities to do something for them. Loyalist men were usually placed in Loyalist regiments which, if not very effective from a military point of view, at least gave them a means of earning their living.

What about Loyalist women? For one thing, their husbands, anxious to prove the greatness of their sacrifice for the cause, pointed out that they had been compelled to fail in one of their most basic moral obligations as men — the support of their wives and children. Part of the debt the British owed them was the maintenance of their helpless families. The women themselves stressed how wretched they were, thanks to their husbands' devotion to the

GIFTS FROM THE PAST



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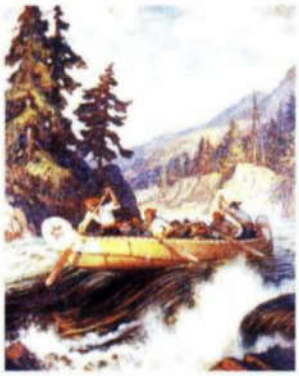

A. *Chief Trader Archibald McDonald Descending the Fraser*
By A. Sherriff Scott.

B. *S.S. "Beaver" Off Fort Victoria*
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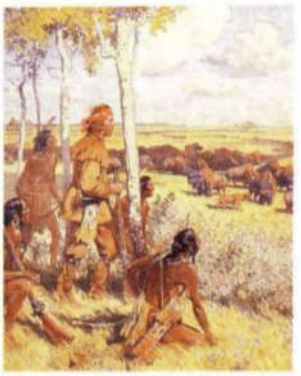
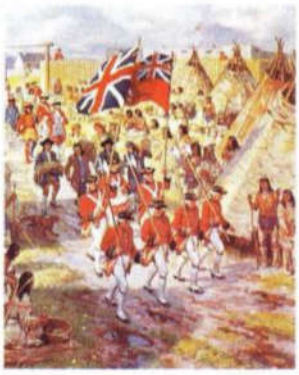


C. *Kelsey Sees the Buffalo*
By C.W. Jefferys.



D. *Trading Ceremony at York Factory*
By A. Sherriff Scott.

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Loyalist cause. They did not detail how much *they* had done for the cause nor did they claim political convictions which they had as much, or as little, right to do as their husbands did. Why not?

In every culture there are things which cannot be said because there is no language in which to express them. In the conservative culture of the Loyalist women and of the British authorities to whom they were speaking, there was no language in which women's "experience could be interpreted as achievements rather than sufferings" and in which women could present themselves as heroic and political beings.

In the circumstances of immediate and pressing need in which the Loyalist women and their children were placed, an emphasis on their feebleness worked. The British authorities did offer them help, albeit of a somewhat grudging nature; there seemed to be a feeling that this raggedy crew of women might support themselves by taking in one another's washing, and the accommodations provided for them, such as the barracks at Machiche, were undeniably grim.

In the long term, however, the myth of the heroic Loyalist men and the passive, tearful Loyalist women, which began with the Loyalists' petitions and rolled on, gathering strength, in the nineteenth century, created a terrible injustice to the Loyalist women. We should be glad that Janice Potter-MacKinnon has given their story back to them as she gives it to us.

Some years ago, I lived in Kingston, Ontario, in an old house which was said to have originally stood on near-by Carleton Island. When I think back on myself looking out towards Lake Ontario and *not knowing* that on Carleton Island Loyalist women lived in barracks with their husbands in conditions so unhappy that at least one woman is said to have killed her own baby and that from there Sarah McGinnis was forced to beg an increase in her rations from the authorities as she was sharing what little she had with the Indians, I feel not so much angry as cheated. History can be a bag of tricks played on the living as well as the dead and the lives of women today are diminished by what history has done to women who lived before us.

Loyalist refugees on the St. Lawrence, by C.W. Jefferys.

Winnipeg archivist Anne Morton is the Prairie and N.W.T. Representative to the Canadian Committee on Women's History.

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The Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri, 1840-1865. By John E. Sunder. The University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 1993. 336 pp., illus. $16.95.

Building a Province: The Story of Saskatchewan in Documents. David E. Smith, editor. Fifth House Publishers, Saskatoon, 1992. 464 pp. $24.95.

Law for the Elephant, Law for the Beaver: Essays in the Legal History of the North American West. John McLaren, Hamar Foster and Chet Orloff, editors. Ninth Judicial Circuit Historical Society, Pasadena, California, 1992. 322 pp., $24.00.

The Grand Portage Story. By Carolyn Gilman. Minnesota Historical Society Press, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1992. 168 pp., illus. $8.50.

Farm, Factory and Fortune: New Studies in the Economic History of the Maritime Provinces. Kris Inwood, editor. Acadiensis Press, Fredericton, 1993. 274 pp. $19.95.

British Columbia: An Illustrated History. By Geoffrey Molyneux. Raincoast Books, Vancouver, 1992. 135 pp., illus. $14.95.

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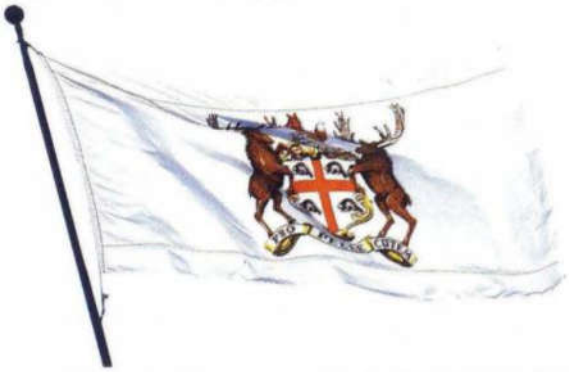

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THE PACKET

Letters, Notes and Opinion

The Private Life of R.B. Bennett

In his review of P.B. Waite's *The Loner* [*The Beaver*, April/May 1993] Allan Levine describes Waite as "a wonderful story teller with a good eye for detail and anecdote". Among other stories in *The Loner* Levine's interest was attracted by the possibility that R.B. Bennett suffered from phimosis as a reason for his not marrying. Waite further stated that such a condition could not be remedied in Bennett's youth. Not only is the supposed "fact" not attributed to any person, but it is most unlikely that such personal information in party records had any real basis. Apart from the questionable taste in promulgating this theory, Waite is probably wrong in his account. This pathology is straightforward and although not able to be remedied in Hopewell Cape, certainly in Moncton there were surgeons who could carry out such simple surgery. The condition may well have never existed except in some chronicler's imagination because it was a fairly usual practice to circumcise male infants at the time of Bennett's birth. Waite is disingenuous if, as it appears, he suggests that the problems and pain would occur only in marriage.

Waite's own description of Bennett's life in Calgary, with a Bennett table at the Palliser and a coterie of male cronies seems to present a better reason for bachelorhood than physical problems. Bennett enjoyed his life in the law, his teaching of juniors, his politics and being a man of affairs, and may well have been happy and content in his Calgary environment. He may have been a "natural bachelor". True enough Bennett was powerfully attracted to Mrs. Colville, but this was after his duties as prime minister took him more and more away from Calgary. It was she who made the first approach in the unusual circumstance of directing a request for information about immigration to the prime minister rather than to the department concerned.

On that fateful day when the two parted permanently, was Bennett seeking her hand or was Mrs. Colville asking to have their relationship regularized? The former, as Waite has surmised, seems more likely especially when one remembers that Mrs. Colville, from her vantage point in her forties, may have felt the huge psychological gap of Bennett being 63. Perhaps the earlier attraction for Mrs. Colville was the attraction of power. Whatever the actual circumstances it might have been better for all if Bennett's wishes had been followed and the letters destroyed (and the cane returned).

Waite is a "wonderful story teller", but the reader is left with the uncomfortable feeling that in these stories we are observing the fabrication of a "fable agreed upon", as described in the lead editorial of the same issue of *The Beaver*. Surely both Bennett and the Joan Goodman Lectures deserved better.

Arthur E. Ross, M.D.
Burlingame, California.

His Trusty Hanger

Both Lieutenant-Colonel Ian McCulloch and Michael J. Hodder deserve the thanks of readers for having solved the "Blakney Mystery".

However, the second paragraph of Lieutenant-Colonel McCulloch's letter contains a minor error. The weapon held by the figure on the reverse side of the seal in question is not a "sangar", as stated, but a hanger.

"Hanger", a word of Dutch, or perhaps even Arabic, origin, first occurs in English usage in the late fifteenth century. It denotes a short sword, either straight or curved, which was especially popular with soldiers and sailors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Also called a whinger, or whinyard, and slung from the belt, the hanger was more convenient than a long sword or sabre when the wearer was travelling in a coach, in a small boat, or through heavily wooded country. In fact, when Brigadier-General James Wolfe led his troops into battle on the Plains of Abraham, 13 September 1759, he carried his hanger drawn in his hand. Wolfe's hanger, preserved in a British military museum, is a short, straight, cross-hilted sword without a guard.

The "sanga(r)", "sanger", or "sunga(r)", a Pashto word, is a rough stone breastwork, much used by the Afghans as a field defence in their wars with the British in the nineteenth century. As was also the case with the "boma", or African thornbush hedge, the "sangar" was quickly adopted by British troops, and it was even used against the Métis in Canada.

Robert W. Reid,
Toronto, Ontario.

Trouble at Cross Lake Rapid

In his article on the *Northcote* [*The Beaver*, August/September 1993] Robert Malcomson makes brief mention of an "unnamed and ill-starred" vessel that came to grief in 1873 at the Demi-Charge (or Cross-Lake) Rapids. Likely this was an unpleasant surprise to its owners, the Hudson's Bay Company. It was none to Dr. Alfred R.C. Selwyn, the second Director of the Geological Survey of Canada, who on a reconnaissance trip through the West became an eyewitness of the unnamed wreck and had this to report:

> Moderate length, powerful engines, light draft, and as much strength as possible below the water line are essential points in the construction of any steamer which may be built for the navigation of the Saskatchewan. Last year [1873] the Hudson's Bay Company built a steamboat intended to run from above the Grand Rapids to Edmonton, and her complete failure and loss on the Cross Lake Rapid may be ascribed almost entirely to want of attention to these requirements. She was far too long, and also too weak both in hull and machinery; and my impression, when I saw her lying a wreck on the bank of the river, was that the person who constructed her could never have travelled the route for which she was designed. [Selwyn, A.W.R, 1874. Notes on a journey through the North-West Territory, from Manitoba to Rocky Mountain House. *The Canadian Naturalist and Quarterly Journal of Science*. New Series V.7, No. 4, p. 193-216].

W.O. Kupsch,
Emeritus Professor,
Department of
Geological Sciences,
University of Saskatchewan,
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

The Camerons

I had to write to tell you how much I enjoyed the article by Ian McCulloch on the Scottish Military Traditions in Canada [The *Beaver*, August/September 1993]. However, there is one item that was omitted that I would like to bring to your attention.

He mentions that the first blooding of Canadian Scottish units occurred in August 1942 at Dieppe. The units involved were the Essex Scottish and the Black Watch. There was one other Scottish Regiment involved which he failed to mention, The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada. They landed at Green Beach west of the town and penetrated three-and-one-half miles inland before withdrawing. The regiment suffered three hundred forty-six killed, wounded or taken prisoner due to action that day.

The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada are still an active militia unit stationed at Minto Armouries in Winnipeg.

David Storey,
Chatham, Ontario.

Left Out

Having recently researched, designed and produced a stained glass window for the officers' mess of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's) Hamilton, Ontario, to commemorate the regiment's 90th anniversary, it came as a complete surprise to read "Men Bred in the Rough Bounds: The Scottish Military Tradition in Canada" by Ian McCulloch [*The Beaver*, August/September 1993] and to find no mention of the regiment.

Christopher Wallis,
Grand Bend, Ontario.

The editor of "The Beaver" welcomes contributions to The Packet. Comments on articles, observations on historic events and fresh information from unpublished sources are particularly encouraged. Letters may be edited for length.

At Dieppe

As the new commanding officer of the Black Watch I must personally correct an error of fact contained in my own article "Men Bred in the Rough Bounds" [*The Beaver* August/September 1993]. In my article I state that The Essex Scottish "were reinforced with a company of the Black Watch" at Dieppe when in fact our C Company and our Mortar Platoon reinforced the gallant Royal Regiment of Canada which went in at Blue beach at Puys. I'm indebted to Sergeant M.G. Berry, C Company, of Georgeville, Quebec, for bringing this to my attention.

In an important postscript to my story I must also make mention of the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Regiment whose handsome regimental badge appears with the story. As of this summer they were re-roled from a Highland Regiment to the 59th Air Defence Regiment (Lanark and Renfrew Scottish), one of the first new Total Force artillery regiments combining both Militia and regular Force personnel into an operational unit as part of a new Army restructure initiative. The change is historically correct as the regiment served as a light anti-aircraft unit throughout the Second World War.

Ian M. McCulloch
Lieutenant-Colonel Commanding
The Black Watch
(Royal Highland Regiment)
of Canada,
Montreal, Quebec.

The Lost Cod: What Happened?

Do fish have a history? American humourist Robert Benchley once claimed his career as a Harvard scholar foundered when he wrote an examination essay on New England's cod fishery — from the point of view of the codfish. But with the whole of Atlantic Canada staggering under the nearly total disappearance of the cod from the East Coast fishing banks, the place of cod in the cod fishery is no longer a joke. It is a question of desperate importance, on which historians might yet be called to testify.

The urgent question is: where have the cod gone? For they certainly have gone. To the consternation of the experts, the Grand Banks are suddenly bankrupt. Canada has been forced to declare a near-total halt to East Coast cod fishing, simply because there are hardly any fish left to be caught. Modern high-efficiency trawlers are being taken out to sea and scuttled as a useless burden, and Canada's expensive masterplan for sustained fishing on an industrial basis is going down with them.

The harshest blow has fallen on the fishing communities of Newfoundland, whose livelihood and *raison d'être* has vanished with the cod stocks. Newfoundland and Labrador's fishing people, dependent for generations on the bounty of the cod, have been abruptly turned into "the moratorium people," who survive on temporary payments from the overburdened federal treasury, facing an uncertain future at home and few prospects for emigration. Along with the extinction of the cod stocks, serious and sober commentators talk of the death of Newfoundland society as we have known it.

What happened to the cod? The verdict of one grieving fisherman — "Let's face it: we've caught them all" — seems instantly persuasive in these times. We find it easy to assume that we have overhunted the cod as we overhunted the great auk and the rhino and the passenger pigeon. But marine scientists point to something else too. In a recent newspaper article, distinguished oceanographer Max Dunbar of McGill University argues there has recently been a massive change in the ocean "climate". Though not dismissing the role of over-fishing, he points to a sudden fall in North Atlantic water temperatures, one that might well have a decisive impact on the cod population. Dunbar suspects some centuries-long oceanic cycle is at work here.

Over-fishing or ocean changing? Both may be at work. We can only judge over-fishing if we know the long-term size of the stock, and we can only identify a long ocean-climate cycle if there is evidence of it at work in the past. In other words, both ideas need to be tested against what Dunbar calls time-series observations — which is another way to say data from history. Canada, unlike some fishing nations, has never invested in systematic recording of ocean conditions. Although the Grand Banks cod have been fished continuously since John Cabot reported their existence 500 years ago, Professor Dunbar says in his article, "not much is known of fluctuations in the fishery, of whether there were times when the cod were less abundant than at other times."

That statement galvanized this historian. Fifteen years ago, as a young historical researcher, I participated in a debate about over-fishing versus climate change — and we were talking about the East Coast cod fishery of the early 1700s! *"There has not been the slightest appearance of the fish stock this fall. This has greatly astonished our fishermen — who will all be wiped out."* That report, so prophetic of 1993, actually comes from 1739, and I wrote about it in 1977. About the same time, Laurier Turgeon, now of Laval University, showed that France's large Newfoundland fishing fleets suffered shrinking catches in the early eighteenth century, and he speculated about ocean climate as a cause. Historical geographer Grant Head of Wilfrid Laurier University studied similar problems for early English Newfoundland in his 1976 book *Eighteenth-Century Newfoundland*, and he speculated about local over-fishing.

If records from more than 250 years ago hint about cycles of abundance and scarcity on the Grand Banks, could our historians construct the "time-series observations" that the oceanographers seem to need? Could historical sources report when the ocean seemed warmer or cooler, when the cod stocks seemed more or less abundant, and how those changes related to the fishing effort itself? Recently I asked some historians what was known about these matters from the 1700s through the 1900s.

THE READERS' SURVEY

Thanks to all the *Beaver* readers who have been sending in their nominations for the "Reader's Choice" survey we announced in the October/November issue. (Nominations closed in mid-November). We have received a diverse and fascinating range of suggestions, and they will be reported on in the next issue, February/March 1994.

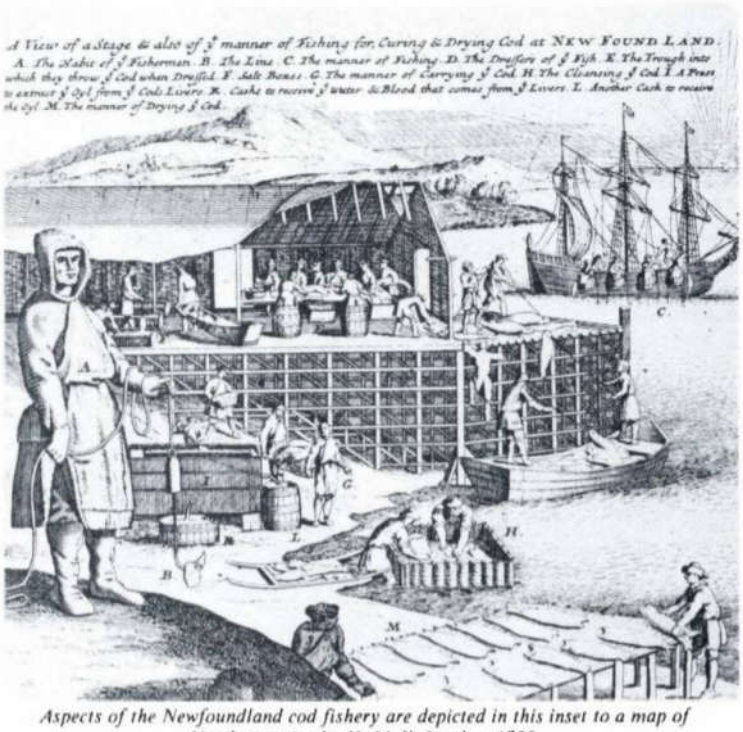
What do we know of the state of the cod stocks in history? "I'm just amazed how little we know," replied Grant Head. "Not very much, not to my knowledge," said James Hiller of Memorial University. "We know frustratingly little," said his colleague Rosemary Ommer.

Yet both Head and Hiller think historical records could help. "We really need to compare nineteenth-century yields to the modern take to see how serious the impact might have been in the nineteenth century. So far most of the work done is local. It doesn't really allow overall comparisons," said Head. "I think it would be possible," said Hiller. "It would be a very large project, and the accuracy would be only general. But from about the 1880s, it should be possible for the offshore."

I talked to one historian who doubts that history has much to tell about either over-fishing or changing ocean conditions. Shannon Ryan of Memorial, the author of *Fish Out of Water*, a history of the nineteenth-century cod trade, said he was convinced "that over-fishing is an entirely new phenomenon. We have never had a situation where the trawlers [domestic and foreign] were just vacuuming up the catch the way they have been recently. It's a completely new situation." Ryan suspects that even if some great ocean cycle had caused the fish population to fluctuate in the past, it would not have been noticed by Newfoundland's fishing fleets as they skimmed off a tiny share of the stock.

"You do see times when the catch is low. But at those times the market is poor too. So they are not investing so heavily in the fishery, or the fishermen are more inclined to go woodcutting or something else. There is no evidence that anything other than the market is at stake here. You rarely saw a good market and a poor catch."

Still, Ryan acknowledges that his study focuses on Newfoundland's own catch, which came mostly from inshore waters, not on the big foreign fleets that have worked offshore over the centuries. The other scholars mostly suspect there might be things to find from a study of the whole picture. And certainly something strange was happening to the cod population in those early years of the 1700s, if at no other time.


A View of a Stage &c also of ye manner of Fishing for, Curing & Drying Cod at NEW FOUND LAND.
A. The Habit of ye Fisherman. B. The Line. C. The manner of Fishing. D. The Dresser of ye Fish. E. The Trough into which they throw ye Cod when Dressed. F. Safe Boats. G. The manner of Carrying ye Cod. H. The Cleansing ye Cod. I. A Press to extract ye Oyl from ye Cods Livers. K. Casks to receive ye water & Blood that comes from ye Livers. L. Another Cask to receive the Oyl. M. The manner of Drying ye Cod.

Aspects of the Newfoundland cod fishery are depicted in this inset to a map of North America by H. Moll, London, 1720.

It's not that no one has written about the cod fishery. But perhaps historians (like marine scientists and even fishing crews) took the cod for granted, and wrote about other aspects of the industry: its diplomacy, its marketing struggles, the struggles between fishers and merchants. Rosemary Ommer described how the historians' interest moved from merchants and politicians to fishing communities and fishing families — from political history to social history, in other words. It's been good, insightful history, often with pointed criticisms. But the step from social history to environmental history has not been taken. "We know less about the exploitation of the resource than about the exploitation of the fishermen," concluded Laurier Turgeon.

As a result, there has not been much for historians to offer oceanographers and fishing fleets on the urgent question of cod stocks. In general, academic scholars rarely expect to consider practical applications of their work. In any case, today's historians tend to be modest about the lessons of history, about conclusive historical proof, about contemporary applications of learning about the past. In this case, maybe, historians have been too modest, and let slip an opportunity to contribute.

But don't blame the historians entirely. Oceanographers and fisheries managers have never looked to historians for practical information about ocean climate or the state of the cod stocks. And in that they are probably no different from the rest of us. From history, Canadians still expect colourful and dramatic stories more than real guidance to our problems, whether scientific, economic or political.

"It is two solitudes, oceanographers and historians," said Rosemary Ommer. But the crisis in Atlantic Canada is ending that. "I'm now working with an oceanographer on a project we call 'Sustainability in a Changing Cold Ocean Coastal Environment.' We're going to start 'hindcasting,' doing retrospective resource analysis. It is starting to come together."

One thing seems clear: the extent of today's situation is unprecedented. Never before has a changing ocean climate been accompanied by such sustained pressure on the fish population. The result shows in the pain and desperation seen in the news film from any harbour or fish plant in Atlantic Canada. Even if historians have little to say at present about the changing state of the cod stocks, they do have ideas about this crisis and the future.

Rosemary Ommer is one of a long line of Atlantic Canadian historians who have concerned themselves with the social and economic prospects of the fishing communities. For a hundred years, she said in a recent lecture, politicians and planners have looked to industrial megaprojects — railways, hydro dams, oil refineries, Hibernia — to transform Newfoundland's economy. They have all failed, and the result is a new kind of megaproject, the moratorium that has put a whole society on welfare.

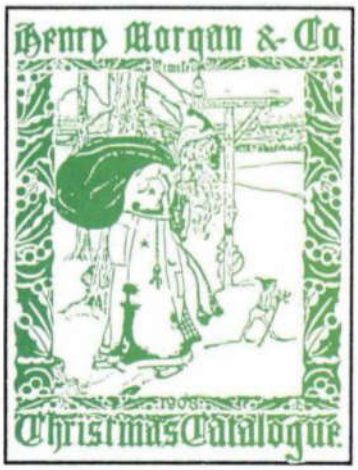
Even the plans for the fishery have been industrial in scale, Ommer argues: "After 1978, with the 200-mile limit, there were virtually unlimited subsidies for expansion of fishing companies. And the depredation on the stocks was unprecedented. Only the local fishers — the outports — knew there was over-production, and they knew it from the 1980s at least. Outports are ecological communities, you have to understand that."

The lesson from a hundred years of megaproject disasters, says Ommer, is that small-scale solutions are the only ones worth trying. Fishing people have always been entrepreneurs of a kind, she stresses. "If it is all small-scale, then it becomes a challenge for local entrepreneurs." People in the outports have always expected to do a little logging, trapping, hunting, sealing, fishing. "They can go to Alberta or to Hibernia for a while. They can run craft industries and eco-tourism projects. We've got more history here than anywhere in North America, and the potential for tourism is limitless. I'd like to see us take that old coastal ferry and make it a rival to the Alaska tours."

What Ommer calls "occupational pluralism" means a lot of seasonal occupations, none individually adequate, but all working together to support communities. As an historian, Ommer knows that is the only way coastal society in Newfoundland has ever really worked. She is convinced it is also the model for the twenty-first century.

That is a deeply historical vision. It suggests that even if the last hundred years have been an unfortunate wrong turning, Newfoundland may yet continue by adapting the patterns that originally sustained it. The historians may not yet have explained the state of the cod stocks, in other words, but they still have something to contribute.

Rosemary Ommer spoke on "One Hundred Years of Fishing Crises" in October, when she delivered the Stewart MacNutt Memorial Lecture at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, New Brunswick.



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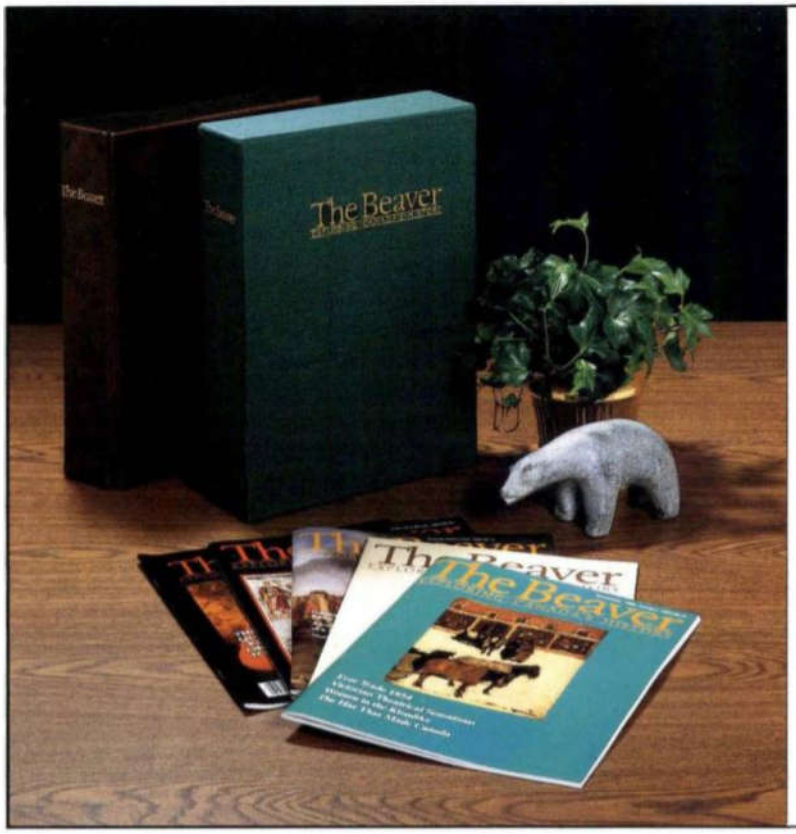

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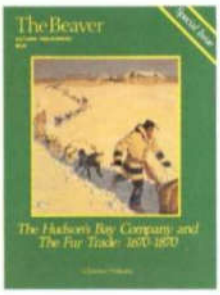

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